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GAMEFAN

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OLUME 7 • ISSUE 1
ANUARY 1999

Dreamcast™



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UROK 2
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Ed Zone



Welcome to the January issue of GameFan! We've been out of action for a spell, but as everybody knows there's no keeping a good thing down. Despite our less than prolific run of issues last year, I'm here to say that there's nothing to worry about and there will be a full twelve issues this coming annum. I'll get into more details next month, but suffice it to say we're not going anywhere except up like a rocket from this moment forward.

> "...the hard-core gamer is alive and well in the good ol' USA..."

Now that I've gotten that obligatory bit out of the way, we'd like to sincerely and wholeheartedly apologize for any disruption our sporadic publishing schedule has caused. To quote one 3rd party developer, "We're nothing without you", and we echo that sentiment to the nth factor. Those that stuck with us during this rough period with letters and e-mails of encouragement (my fav quote would have to be "Please save us from the other magazines..."), have our gratitude beyond words. There is no way I can adequately express just how much each and every comment (good and bad) meant to us as we put this latest issue together — thanks from the bottom of our collective hearts! Guess the hard-core gamer is alive and well in the good ol' USA (I did have my doubts for a while...).

As for this issue, check out the *FIRST* official review of *Turok 2* (based on a final version, not some less-than-complete rev), the *FIRST* *South Park* review, the *FIRST* *Rogue Squadron* review, and drum roll please, the *FIRST* actual Dreamcast reviews by any US gaming pub (by a large margin, I might add). Not bad for a mag that "won't be around next month". All of this is wrapped in a cover featuring the pinnacle of Nintendo and Shigeru Miyamoto's expertise, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

As for Dreamcast, believe the hype, folks — Sega is back! After some quality time with the initial crop of games (spearheaded by the unbelievable *Virtua Fighter 3tb*), we anxiously await what's next from companies like Sega's own AM teams, Capcom, Konami, Treasure, Climax (both of 'em), and even Sega of America (just wait till you get a load of some of their stuff...my heart, <urk>).

Our aforementioned cover feature is the mightiest of games (nay, experiences). Sure everybody else took a valiant stab at bringing home the feeling of this legendary title in their various reviews, but we've saved the best for last with a review penned by print newcomer Super Teeter. Featuring an assist from veteran pastry-on-the-town, Dangohead, this is the only review you need to read.

As for the next issue, look for much more on Dreamcast; a tribute to the last Saturn game, *Magic Knight Rayearth* (yes, it's finally here); Konami's *Castlevania* and *Silent Hill*; and Namco's *Ridge Racer Type 4* among many, many others.

So that about wraps it up for this months 'ECM's Soap Box Rant'. Enjoy the issue and make sure you send plenty of feedback our way (my e-mail is emylonas@gamefan.com, in case you were wondering), both good and, <sigh>, bad. Till next time (which won't be long, I promise)...

ECM

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Art Director
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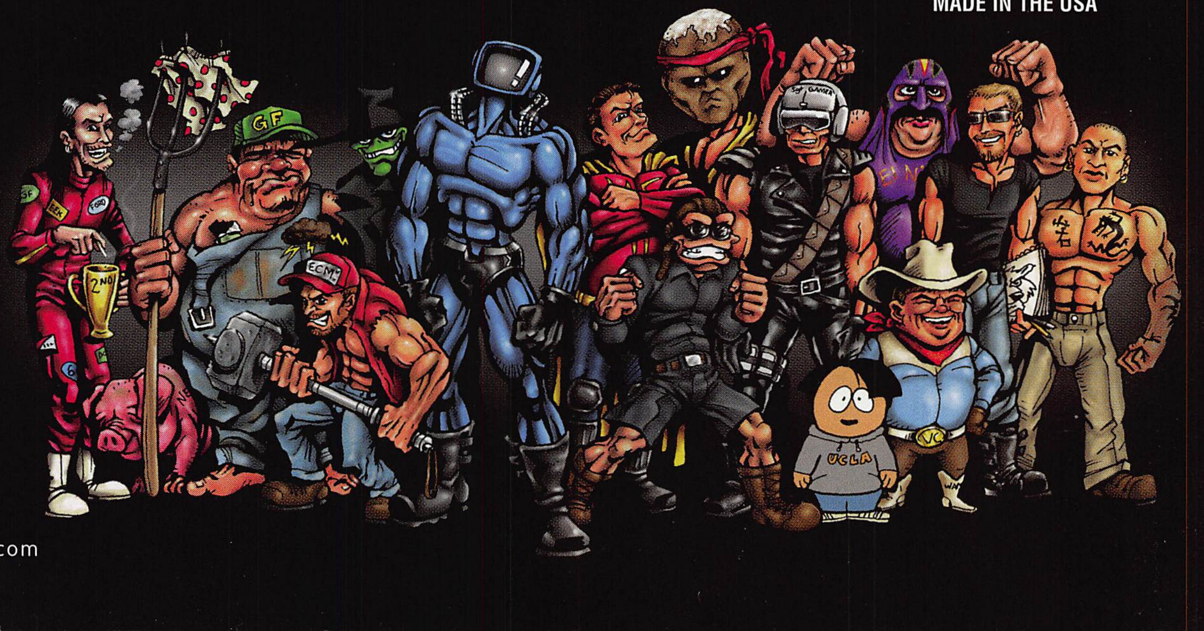
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For advertising inquiries only:
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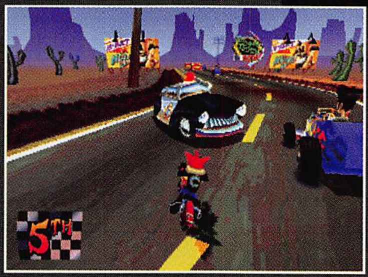
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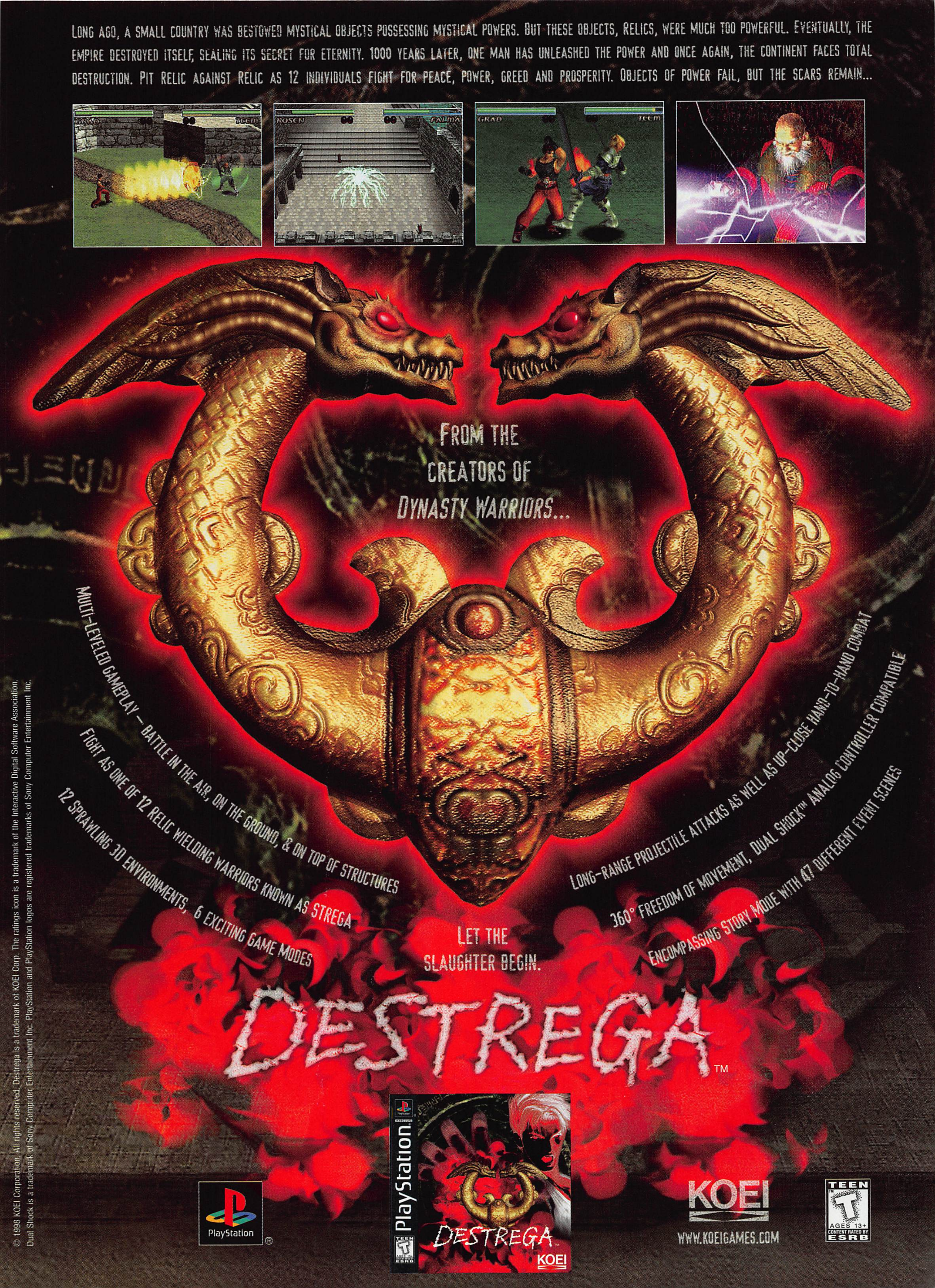


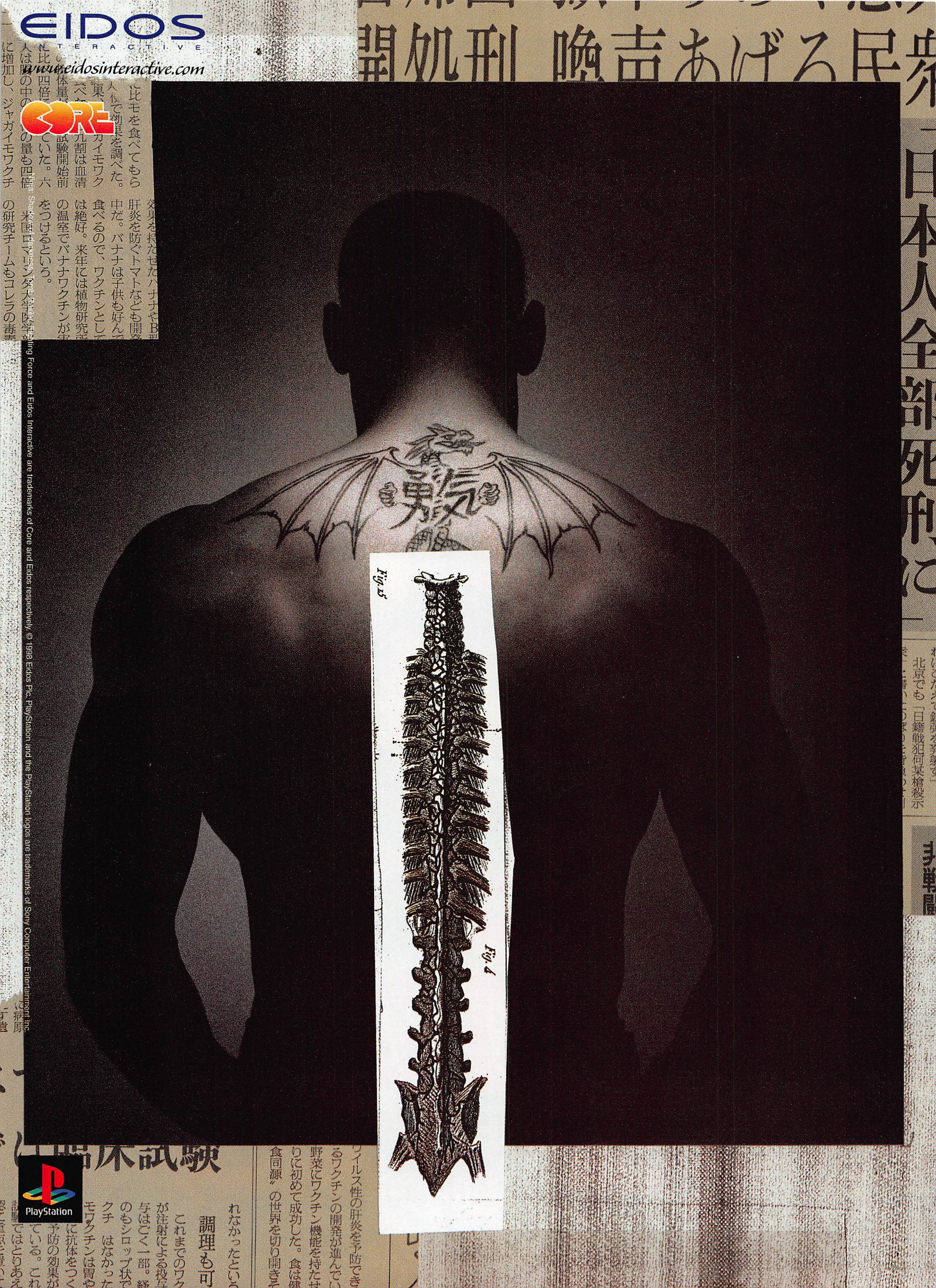









LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS BESTOWED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN...
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Fig. 5
Fig. 4
PlayStation

Top 10 Most Wanted



READERS' TOP TEN

1) *Zelda: OOT* - N64
2) *WCW/NWO Revenge* - N64
3) *Xenogears* - PS
4) *Goldeneye* - N64
5) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS



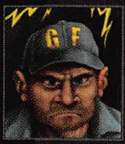
6) *Tekken 3* - PS
7) *NFL Blitz* - N64
8) *Banjo Kazooie* - N64
9) *Crash 3: Warped* - PS
10) *F-Zero X* - N64

1 READERS' TOP TEN **ZELDA: OOT N64**

READERS' MOST WANTED

1) *Turok 2* - N64
2) *RE Code Veronica* - DC
3) *Rogue Squadron* - N64
4) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
5) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
6) *Street Fighter Alpha 3* - PS
7) *Castlevania 64* - N64
8) *South Park* - N64
9) *Silent Hill* - PS
10) *Ridge Racer Type 4* - PS

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN



1. *Virtua Fighter 3 TB* - DC
2. *Tetris DX* - GameBoy Color
3. *MediEvil* - PS
4. *Tiny Tank* - PS
5. *Asteroids* - PS
6. *Strikers 1945 2* - SS
7. *Turok 2* - N64
8. *Apocalypse* - PS
9. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
10. *Glover* - N64



1. *Tales of Destiny* - PS
2. *VOOT(Virtual On 2)* - Arcade
3. *Samurai Shodown 2* - NeoGeo
4. *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
5. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
6. *Devil Dice* - PS
7. *Daytona 2: BOTE* - Arcade
8. *Monster Rancher* - PS
9. *Battle Ballz* - Arcade
10. *Soul Caliber* - Arcade



1. *Shogo* - PC
2. *Twisted Metal 3* - PS
3. *Madden '99* - N64
4. *Apocalypse* - PS
5. *Glover* - N64
6. *Wild 9* - PS
7. *Everquest* - PC
8. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
9. *NFL Blitz* - N64
10. *Wipeout* - PS



1. *Kagero: Deception II* - PS
2. *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
3. *VOOT(Virtual On 2)* - Arcade
4. *Tenchu* - PS
5. *Xenogears* - PS
6. *Glover* - N64
7. *Devil Dice* - PS
8. *SF Alpha 3* - Arcade
9. *Beatmania* - PS
10. *Hard Hat Mack* - C64

Jace Fury
(image in progress)

1. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
2. *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
3. *Crash 3: Warped* - PS
4. *Turok 2* - N64
5. *MSH Vs. SF* - SS (Import)
6. *Asteroids* - PS
7. *SF Alpha 3* - Arcade
8. *Apocalypse* - PS
9. *MediEvil* - PS
10. *KoF Rd1* - NeoGeo Pocket



1. *Azure Dreams* - PS
2. *Crash 3: Warped* - PS
3. *Fallout 2* - PC
4. *MediEvil* - PS
5. *CW: Vengeance* - PS
6. *NBA Live '99* - PS
7. *Madden '99* - N64
8. *Tiny Tank* - PS
9. *Devil Dice* - PS
10. *Twisted Metal 3* - PS

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All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

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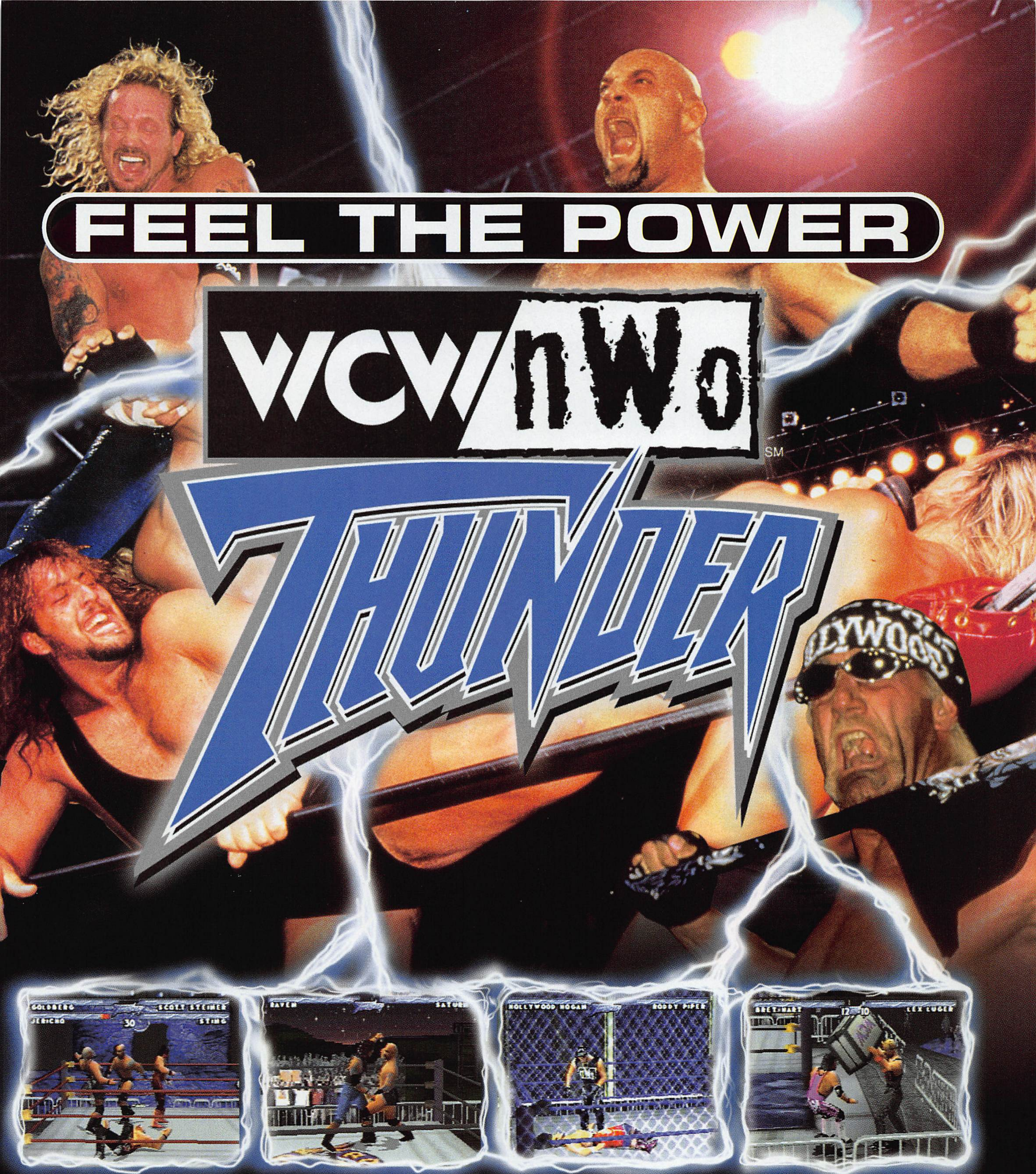
Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:
Kudo Tsunoda, Producer Extraordinaire
Cyclone Studios

1. *Uprising X* - PS
2. *Battle Stations* - PS
3. *Goldeneye* - N64
4. *PGA Tour Golf* - PS
5. *Legend of Zelda* - NES
6. *NHL '98* - PS
7. *Nightmare Creatures* - PS
8. *Tomb Raider* - PS
9. *Tecmo Bowl* - NES
10. *Any game produced by Dave Bean*





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VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality





The Legend of Zelda: TOOT GAME OF THE MONTH!



Apocalypse
PlayStation
Activision
Action/Shooter

It's all about analog shooting control! This single aspect saves it; raising it from good, to a Zen-like experience. The graphics rage (though a bit dark), and minus the somewhat, uh, snapped camera angles (Lakitu we need you!) this game is pure, 'set your adrenaline on fire', action. A great game that's a bit too easy, *Apocalypse* will appeal to all ten of you that adored ASC/VC's *One* (hopefully the rest of you will actually buy this *one*, <grumble>).

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 5 | **91**

Screw the delays, this one was well worth the wait! There's a new Bruce in video gaming and Mr. Willis proves (with the help of Neversoft) that he knows his way around the action arena with one hell of an explosive ride. Non-stop intensity and some of the best visuals to ever grace the ol' PSX make this one a keeper, though hardcore gamers may find it a bit on the easy side.

G 10 | C 8 | P 9 | M 8 | O 7 | **93**

Gamers want *Another One*? Well, this isn't done by ASC, but it's so close to *One* that it hurts. Plus, it features Bruce Willis' stamp and voice talent. Plenty of explosions, lighting effects, and weapons to keep shooter freaks like ECM amused for hours. It's also nice to see games supporting the second analog stick of the Dual Shock.

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 8 | O 6 | **90**



Asteroids
PlayStation
Activision
Shooter

Being one of the few eds around GF that actually respects the good ol' days of arcade gaming, no one was more elated when the final rev of *Asteroids* rolled in. It's all about classic gameplay charged up with PS-visuals. *Tempest 2000* led the charge and now Syrox continues the tradition in fine form. The gents to my right have this one nailed: this game is pure, unadulterated fun. Those of you that weary of the current crop of no-gameplay titles need to give this one a spin.

G 8 | C 7 | P 7 | M 6 | O 5 | **87**

This one REALLY surprised the heck out of me. Not only is this style of gameplay completely refreshing, but it's also incredibly fun. The graphics are really good, and the new weapon system is much welcomed. ALL remixes should be this good. Plus, this is a game that you can probably play with your parents (that is, if you'd want to). Rent it, buy it, borrow it...just make sure to give this one a spin. The PlayStation sleeper hit of the year, no question.

G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 7 | O 10 | **94**

Wow, what a surprise! Not only did Syrox developments give *Asteroids* a cool intro, but a complete facelift to boot! All development teams looking to recreate that old magic on today's consoles need to take some serious pointers from these guys. The graphics are stunning at times, and with two-player simultaneous action you just can't go wrong with this one. Rest assured, this ain't your parents' *Asteroids*!

G 9 | C 8 | P 7 | M 5 | O 5 | **90**



Brave Fencer Musashi
PlayStation
EA/Square
Action/Adventure

Don't ask me why... I know this game is super fruity with rainbow sprinkles on top. But the game really grows on you. Perhaps it's the cool 3D-cartoony visuals, the excellent music, or the really, really fruity humor. Whatever it is, *Brave Fencer Musashi* will most likely be one of the future Graveyard games, overshadowed by the *FFVIII* demo it has aboard. Despite some wild voice-acting, all gamers should try *BFM* and like me, you'll probably be hooked.

G 8 | C 9 | P 9 | M 9 | O 8 | **91**

Once you get over the kiddy voices, there's an enjoyable RPG here. Looks like Square's trying to give Working Designs a run for their money in the zany world of over-the-top translation. I prefer the faster pace of *Musashi* to the slower, traditional, story-driven *Xenogears* (not that I have anything against story-driven ideas). But if you can't handle things like ThirstQuencher Empire and Allucaneat Castle, then you might want to stay away.

G 7 | C 8 | P 8 | M 8 | O 8 | **85**

Square does an action-adventure game for the PlayStation? Sign me up! Actually, what could have easily been a straight rip-off of the *Zelda* franchise is one of the most original PlayStation games to come out in awhile. Of course, even thought it's 'loosely' based on a Japanese folk hero (everyone go read the book *Musashi*... now!), there are liberties, but who cares? The game's loony, it's long and it's a lotta fun. The voices... oh, so fruity! TOO fruity!

G 7 | C 7 | P 10 | M 9 | O 9 | **88**



A Bug's Life
PlayStation
Disney Interactive
3D Platformer

Oh, boy...let the world know that when I agree with Super Teeter it's a sure sign that the end of the world is coming. Painful, broken control had me reaching for the Raid right around 30 minutes in. I really, really wanted to like this game, what with ace developer Traveler's Tales behind it (minus *Rascal*, <shudder>). Alas, it wasn't meant to be and Teeter, Fury and I are now heading to the parking lot for a round of skeet shooting...

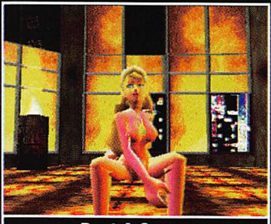
G 7 | C 3 | P 3 | M 6 | O 3 | **47**

I find it hard to believe that sane gamers anywhere would spend their hard-earned dollars on this poorly crafted version of Pixar's *A Bug's Life*. Sure, the graphics are sharp and colorful, and yes, I did enjoy the cinemas but *A Bug's Life* lacks heavily in gameplay. Gamers with half a brain know games with nice graphics and no gameplay equal, at best, a one-night rental.

G 8 | C 4 | P 5 | M 6 | O 6 | **45**

Uh, sorry, but no thanks. Disney's blatant attempt to capitalize on what's sure to be a smash-hit movie REEKS of mediocrity. The control is so bad, it's physically painful to play. Sure, the graphics are really clean, but who the heck cares?! When games are this bad, it should be a felony... and punished accordingly. What a waste of storage space.

G 7 | C 2 | P 3 | M 6 | O 1 | **50**



Bust A Groove
PlayStation
989 Studios
Dance & Rythm Action

"Like Arnold Schwarzenegger I'm the only true eraser..." Jeeyeah das right, MC Waka is in the hizouse! <Ahem> Addictive gameplay, stunning graphics, and the overall simplicity of this game is what makes this one a true diamond in the rough. I still enjoy playing the game, and those of you who think that this is another *Parappa* clone have to check this one out and see just how plain 'fun' this game is! No ryddim, no skill!

G 10 | C 9 | P 8 | M 10 | O 10 | **97**

I am so relieved this one was salvaged from the dark pit where canceled games go. When youngsters and teens get a look at this game, it's all over; a blockbuster in Japan, this game should do well here. Great hi-res graphics, music, 60 fps action — this is a must-own title for PlayStation owners. Fun at parties, raves, or just home alone, what're you waiting for? ...Unless you have no rhythm.

G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 10 | O 10 | **95**

It was here, then gone, here again, gone again... then finally, it comes out. Well, amen to 989 for publishing this extremely entertaining game. Taking the concept of *Parappa, Bust A Groove* outshines the rapping mutt with slick animation, excellent tunes, and a two player dance off. Just make sure you don't play it with someone who doesn't have rhythm (i.e Eggo).

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 9 | O 9 | **94**

You may recall that I dogged *CW* last year due to repetitive play mechanics and lack of story. It seems they managed to at least address those concerns in part, though I still think the story needs to be more immersive a la *Wing Commander*. However, amazingly enough the visuals have improved since last year and Mike Ellis and company at Psygnosis' Liverpool studio should be commended for a pretty solid product — just give me more story interaction next time!!!

G 10 | C 8 | P 7 | M 8 | O 5 | **85**

What I like to think of more as a remake than a sequel, *Colony Wars: Vengeance* is what the original *CW* should have been. Psygnosis seems to have finally figured out that you need more than just eye-popping visuals to make a great game. CW:V takes the staggering look of CW and infuses it with a gripping story and some solid gameplay..

G 9 | C 8 | P 9 | M 8 | O 8 | **91**

Despite recently leaving us hanging with the likes of *Rosco McQueen*, Psygnosis hits up the cynics with a little show, demonstrating that they still know their way around the little gray box with a sequel that addresses the issues of an already stellar series in almost every way possible. Great visuals, killer enemies, and a good deal of variety make this one a must-own for PlayStation action addicts. Top notch.

G 9 | C 8 | P 9 | M 8 | O 7 | **95**



Colony Wars: Vengeance
PlayStation
SCEA
3D Shooter

While weaving my way through the latest in the *Crash* chronicles I have to wonder what's become of Sony's favorite son. Wielding bazookas, riding motorcycles, and joined this time out by the insufferable Coco, what's become of the *Crash* I once loved? Sure, the game looks amazing; the music is actually tolerable this time and the biplane/space sequences are cool, but this is not the bandicoot I know and love — give him back Sony!!!!

G 9 | C 8 | P 6 | M 7 | O 7 | **80**

Everyone is looking for the sure hit and a sequel is the best place to go fishing. *Crash 3* certainly lives up to the hype, but it is clear that the franchise may be nearing the end. There is little new ground being broken, so if Naughty Dog wants to avoid having their prize mascot become a tired sight, they should stop now. Let's see if they have anything else creative up their sleeve. Let's just hope it isn't a Coco spin-off...

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 8 | O 4 | **90**

The whole *Crash* series has failed to suffer from any lack of gameplay or graphical drawbacks upon the PlayStation. *Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped* stays along the same track, with more features, more gameplay... just plain more! Probably the best of the three, some may deplore some of the new gameplay additions (i.e. Crash's bazooka) but I think they just add more fun to the game. Still, as solid as this series is, it is getting a bit worn.

G 8 | C 8 | P 7 | M 8 | O 7 | **84**



Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped
PlayStation
Sony
3D Platformer

This is the sleeper of the year. It's a shame that there's no advertising/press behind it, because this is definitely a great game. Sure there's a bit of a learning curve, but once you get it, you won't put this game down. Best of all, it's just plain fun. I've spent more time playing this game than any other this year.

G 8 | C 7 | P 8 | M 10 | O 9 | **95**

This is a very evil game...any game where you kill a hapless mother and her child at the same time to steal their energy is bad. Which is why it's so much fun! I liked the first *Deception* quite a bit, and the second makes the game easier to play. The end result is a game which, unlike the first, is easy to get into and highly addictive. While the controls of your main character could've benefitted from a tune-up, it's easy to look past it.

G 8 | C 7 | P 9 | M 8 | O 8 | **87**

Eggo had to drag me away from *Azure Dreams* to play this — and I'm happier for it. I never played the first *Deception*, but this was a true treat. To be able to play out cruel games of cat and mouse is the type of festive game playing that makes El Niño smile. *Deception 2* is like a game of speed chess, mixing the strategy of setting up a good attack with the need for quick-thinking responses (those intended victims are a wily lot).

G 8 | C 7 | P 9 | M 8 | O 9 | **89**



Kagero: Deception II
PlayStation
Tecmo
Trap/Sim

I'm really glad Atlus brought this one over, because it's the best 2D fighter on the PlayStation. I could do without the one-hit fatalities, but everything else about *GG* is awesome compared to horrendous Capcom ports. The characters and insane backgrounds flex some of the PlayStation's underestimated 2D muscle. And that heavy metal soundtrack is a perfect complement for this frantic fighter.

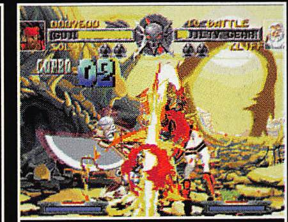
G 9 | C 8 | P 10 | M 9 | O 6 | **88**

SNK who? Capcom what? While character design and the overall look of the game is fantastic, what's with the choppy animation? The fighting engine is pretty darn good, with some crazy two-in-one's, air combos, and some ultra-cool "fatalities". Like the way *Groove On Fight* is for the Saturn, *GG* is a fast-paced fighter that isn't too serious on tactics and more concentrated on fun.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 | **84**

Who says the PlayStation can't do awesome 2D? Out of nowhere comes *Guilty Gear*, a completely unique 2D fighter that basically changes everything. HUGE sprites that are animated stunningly, plus you'll get awesome lighting effects, transparencies and colors everywhere! So good! While the control is a tad loose for my blood, it's still fantastic. The most visually impressive 2D fighter ever seen on the PlayStation. Oh, it's a great fighter too!

G 8 | C 7 | P 7 | M 8 | O 4 | **88**



Guilty Gear
PlayStation
Atlus
Fighting

Hail to Konami! They picked a talented group of English voice actors who actually outdo their Japanese counterparts for the U.S. *MGS*. Then you throw in the most ambitious movie-like script of any game, two years of drooling anticipation, solid gameplay, a whole lotta fun and you have *Metal Gear Solid*... my pick for game of the year. 'Nuff said.

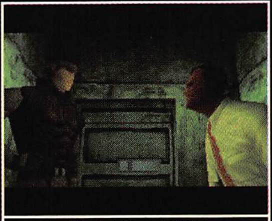
G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 9 | O 9 | **98**

First, the minute flaws in this game. Solid Snake needs walking animation since "tap-walking" is annoying. The story is told in text format which can be tedious reading. Now, I would ramble on all the glories this game has to offer but I don't the space to do it. But for me to say *Metal Gear Solid* is the best game this year should be enough. If you don't buy it now, I will personally send you off to this monastery I know of.

G 9 | C 9 | P 10 | M 10 | O 10 | **98**

Metal Gear Solid is a triumph of technology and great storytelling, all wrapped together in such a good way. Storytelling bliss (the best movie of the year!), and a theme that isn't afraid to be mature (thank you). This is the finest PlayStation game of all time, but misses the magic '100' score only by being FAR too short a game. That's it. *Snatcher* fans, *Policenauts* fans, *game* fans... you simply have to play this. Konami rocks!

G 10 | C 9 | P 10 | M 10+ | O 9 | **98**



Metal Gear Solid
PlayStation
Konami
Action/Adventure

Capcom doing another fighter? Oh well, go with your strengths, I always say. Dango griped about the missing dating sim, but really... come on! The characters themselves are a tad less detailed than those in *SF:EX*, but what the game lacks in detail it definitely makes up for in sheer INSANITY! The most outrageous super moves ever seen, fruity music that's actually kind of cool and of course our sweetheart, Sakura.

G 9 | C 8 | P 9 | M 10 | O 7 | **94**

I'm not into 3D Fighters as much as 2D, but *Rival Schools* is fun... and funny. If you don't find yourself laughing at the game's humor (especially the tag team supers), you should have your head examined by the school nurse. I especially like the tag team super that gives you more supers. I dunno about the gratuitous panty shots though.

G 7 | C 8 | P 7 | M 8 | O 8 | **79**

Capcom you know I love you... So, where's the simulation mode?!? Despite not including one of the coolest features in the import version, *Rival Schools* is nearly a perfect port from the arcade. There are some questionable priority issues with individual character supers, and Tag Team Super. But with all the extra options you'll get when you play, *Rival Schools*, with its Capcom college degree, is riotous fun.

G 8 | C 9 | P 9 | M 8 | O 7 | **90**



Rival Schools
PlayStation
Capcom
Fighting



Rogue Trip
PlayStation
GT Interactive
Car Combat

Hmm, with *Vigilante 8* being not my cup o' tea, would either of the two new motor carnage games hold my attenion? *Twisted Metal 3* is ok, but out of the two, *Rogue Trip* is by FAR the better game. Much better control (who needs realism?) and much better locales = much better game. Still, the faults of *Twisted Metal* are the faults of *Rogue Trip*, namely boring characters and a complete lack of originality. But any game that doesn't take itself seriously can hold my attention anyday.

G 8 · C 9 · P 6 · M 9 · O 3 — **87**

SingleTrac proves that there is life after the loss of their definitive PlayStation franchise with a fruity but action-packed brand of car-based catastrophe. My one problem outside the level design (that, despite a high level of interactivity, fall short of *Vigilante 8*) would have to be the AI, which is nothing less than my whipping boy at its best. Also, be sure to bring a sense of humor along for the ride, cause this one is a bit on the loopy side...

G 9 · C 7 · P 8 · M 9 · O 7 — **86**

Singletrac, the company behind the first two Twisted Metal games, is back with a sugar-coated version of *TM*. The license isn't here, but the engine is... and so is that wacky, patented humor. There's the hot-dog mobile, the nun driving the barbed-wire school bus and the whole tourist payday idea. Still, the car combat genre is becoming way too saturated.

G 7 · C 9 · P 6 · M 7 · O 7 — **78**



Streak
PlayStation
GT Interactive
Racing

The team that brought us the power that is the *Jet Moto* series moves on and gives us this?! There's just no way this is gonna fly in this day and age. When you have a really fast engine, you need really solid, ultra-responsive control and this game lacks that — big time. Marvel as you repeatedly careen into wall after wall. Gentleman, start your controller throwing <SMASH!>.

G 8 · C 2 · P 2 · M 6 · O 5 — **60**

Once again, games this bad NEED to be punished. Tired genres, absolutely NO original thinking is exhibited here. With so many better racers out there (especially *F-Zero X*) this one's not worth the worry. Aren't games supposed to be fun anymore? Did I miss something? Have standards changed in the past month? I didn't think so...

G 6 · C 5 · P 4 · M 5 · O 5 — **70**

Speaking of tired ideas, snow board games need to take a hiatus. SingleTrac has completely exhausted both this style of game, as well as the battle car game. The track design is poor and the control isn't as comfortable as it should be. Trying to find a compelling reason to keep playing *Streak* is like searching for meaning in a Pauly movie. Only those single-minded enough to want to keep playing games in this genre will draw anything resembling enjoyment out of this title. Hey, those GEM trails look really cool, though.

G 8 · C 6 · P 7 · M 7 · O 6 — **70**



Tiny Tank
PlayStation
MGM Interactive
Action/Shooter

TT proves that the design well that is Ed '*Ecco* & *Chakan*' Anunziata never runs dry. A terrificly designed product, with solid gameplay and great production values. Alas, the slightly shaky engine does hurt it somewhat, with a jerky frame rate and some seam issues; it doesn't detract too much from the overall appeal. A great game that nobody will look twice at... <grumble>... a sleeper hit (among many this issue, <sigh>) if there ever was one.

G 8 · C 8 · P 9 · M 8 · O 9 — **93**

I hope that people stand up and take notice of this clever little title. *Tiny Tank* is one of the few truly enjoyable gaming experiences on the PlayStation this holiday season. It may not have the best looks, sound or playability out there, but it combines all of these elements as well as any game can. Add to that some edgy humor and humorous banter skewed at both younger and older players, alike, and you've got some great gaming. I'd like to see a sequel to this (but not before MGM does *Rollerball*).

G 8 · C 8 · P 8 · M 9 · O 9 — **88**

Although I can't claim to be as big a fan of the game's designer as ECM (Chakan...Zzz) I must admit that Tiny Tank is Anunziata's best since Ecco. Extremely original gameplay, great graphics and some of the funniest voice-overs EVER in a game. And the soundtrack? Oh my! Tighten the control a bit and add five points to my score.

G 7 · C 6 · P 8 · M 10 · O 9 — **85**



Twisted Metal 3
PlayStation
989 Studios
Car Combat

Ok, enough is enough! Even though I'd pick *Rogue Trip* over this pap any day of the week, there comes a time when you've played as much 'car-carnage' type games as you can possibly stand. *Twisted Metal 3*, although decent for the genre, is riddled with horrible control (it's TOO realistic, for me anyway), lame characters and tremendously stale locales. Take out the humor that made the first two such a hit and you're left with an empty, smoldering hole. Check please!

G 8 · C 4 · P 5 · M 9 · O 2 — **82**

989 dishes out a slick slice of digital manslaughter with their first effort in the car combat genre, and despite rumors to the contrary, this one is definitely a keeper. Sporting a new engine, *Twisted Metal 3* come out guns blazing with solid AI and classic *TM* car design that more than make up for up-and-down level design to bring Playstation gamers the best *Twisted Metal* yet. A must for die-hard fans.

G 8 · C 8 · P 9 · M 10 · O 7 — **89**

When I first played this game, it didn't look like the *Twisted Metal*s that I spent so many of my early PlayStation days playing. But once you get over the 'new look,' you'll start seeing that there's just enough new stuff here to warrant another *TM*: a few new characters, weapons, levels, and the ability to fire most weapons backwards. The Rob Zombie soundtrack gives the game a harder, fresh edge.

G 8 · C 8 · P 9 · M 8 · O 5 — **85**



Uprising-X
PlayStation
3DO
3D Real-Time Strategy

Great control (dual analog), good play mechanics, and original game design just can't make up for the graphics in this game. While *Uprising X* introduces an interesting combination of *Warcraft*-like strategical building with *Doom*-style shooting, no matter how you look at it, this game looks 1st generation... meaning it looks bad. You name it — draw-in, pixellation, pop-up — *Uprising X* gots it. 'Tis a shame though, a low-down, dirty shame.

G 6 · C 8 · P 8 · M 7 · O 8 — **72**

I'm kinda torn with this title. While *Uprising* could have been really good, it is lacking somwhat in terms of gameplay and visual variety, and it fails to stack up to the PC version on which it is based. Though I liked what I played for the most part, there just wasn't enough to keep me coming back. A decent title, but a bit on the redundant side, so you may want to stick with a rental before you take the plunge.

G 6 · C 8 · P 7 · M 6 · O 7 — **74**

Send in FEMA, Cyclone Studios has made a federal disaster area of *Uprising X*. The definition of painful and about two years behind the times, *Uprising X* is a poor attempt at *Battle Zone*, or an even poorer attempt at *Colony Wars*. I applaud them for utilizing both analog controllers, but this doesn't exactly translate into stimulating (or intuitive) gameplay. The missions are uninspired and the graphics are just plain old. As the great Homer J. Simpson would say: "Doh!" It makes a nice coaster, though.

G 6 · C 7 · P 6 · M 5 · O 7 — **67**



Beat Mania
PlayStation
Konami
DJ Simulation

If you're majorily into *Parappa*-like games (keep the rhythm) then you should definitely check this out. Too bad the two-player mode (basically requiring two turntable controllers) will never see the light of day. The *Metal Gear Solid* song rocks, but the rest of the songs just don't do it for me. Not a good thing, considering this games hefty price tag. Rent it if you can.

G 7 · C n/a · P 7 · M 8 · O 10 — **71**

First Parappa, then Bust A Move: Rhythim and Dance, and now this. I originally played this game at an arcade show many months ago, and I didn't like it (maybe it had something to do with the *VOOT* machine next door). Anyways, available for the home system with it's own control pad (for a hefty price), you can now buy a virtual DJ! Whoopee. I'll pass thank you.

G 5 · C 7 · P 7 · M 9 · O 7 — **74**

Well, since none of the other staff members here at GF have any sense of rhythm and skill at playing video games, I was the only one that actually liked this one. The original controller is a cool novelty, and if you have a freakish sense in collecting those 'weird' games then buy all means get it. Hey, it even comes with an extra 'APPEND' CD that is a PS extra. Difficulty is so-so, but be warned... The Ska is no joke! Now where is my *Dance Dance Dance* game Konami?

G 4 · C 9 · P 8 · M 10 · O 10 — **82**

MSH vs. SF wasn't as warmly received as the other "Versus" series. Still, the Saturn import version of the game is a perfect port of the arcade version. Unfortunately, with so many other fighters like this in the arcade, this kind of fighting game needs an influx of originality. Still, if you're a fan of this form of fighter, "hopefully" you'll be able get your hands on one.

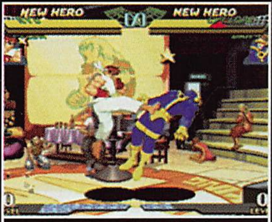
G 8 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 **83**

Finally, *Marvel vs. Street Fighter* arrvies for the Saturn in full, 4-meg RAM cart glory! New characters and insane animation can be expected, as well as some hidden fun (oh yeah, Mech Gouki!). Pretty much identical to *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*, with a few minor changes, thanks to Capcom's patented 'pallette swapping' technology (Wow, it's Mephisto, err, I mean Blackheart!)!

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 4 **85**

Because I grew up on hard-core *Street Fighters (II-III)*, I've never gotten into the *VS* series. It's like Capcom is moving away from gameplay (a *SF* staple) and heading towards flashier supers and dummied-down fireball motions. While the *VS* gamers are gorging themselves on this latest arcade perfect Saturn translation, I'll be over there on *Alpha 2*, waiting for a real challenge on a real *Street Fighter*. Any takers?

G 8 C 8 P 6 M 6 O 2 **74**



Marvel vs Street Fighter
Saturn
Capcom
Fighting

What can I say? I LOVE shooters! If you love 'em too, then here's the next one for you. And while there's quite a bit more slowdown in this Psikyo-bred beast than some of the more recent Saturn shooters, that's no reason to pass this arcade-based behemoth up. And as a brief aside, Dreamcast already has a 2D shooter in the works from Warashi of *Shienryu* fame — REJOICE WITH ME!!! The genre won't die with Saturn! Now go buy this one!

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 8 **87**

In a return to my arcade days, I seem to be enjoying shooters a lot more than I used to. First *Radiant Silvergun*, now *Strikers 1945 2*. It's a sign of the apocalypse! There's a lot to like in this old school package — lots of different birds to fly, plenty of brushes with near-death, and a grip of HARD action. The bosses here aren't as Radiant as say, a *G-Darius*, and there is some nasty slowdown to wade through... but overall, *Strikers* is still fun to play.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 7 **87**

Although I am by no means (not by any stretch of the imagination, to be more precisely) as big a shooter fan as ECM, I do enjoy the occassional blaster. But what's this? This ISN'T a new game? Sorry, but if you're even THINKING of releasing a game like this in this day and age, at least take some time to make it look like it's new, ok? With the likes of *Radiant Silvergun* out there, games like this simply can't compete. Thanks, but no thanks. Next please!

G 5 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 2 **75**



Strikers 1945 2
Saturn
Psikyo
Shooter

What more can be said about the most anticipated game of all time? Exceeding every expectation placed upon it, this massively epic game is the single finest piece of software ever released. *Zelda: OOT* has more gameplay packed into its 40+ hour quest than ANY other game ever created. This is what games are all about folks, and a fine testament to just what great talent and hard work can accomplish. Believe in the legend.

G 10 C 10 P 10 M 10 O 10 **100**

The grand turn-around for the N64 that the video game industry has been predicting, *Zelda: OOT* is the definition of the word "epic". Enormous sprawling worlds to explore, excellent control of every aspect in combat, and a tale to be passed down to generations of video gamers everywhere. While I'm on a much saner level than the two crazed colleagues to my sides, you cannot overlook this grand adventure.

G 9 C 10 P 9 M 9 O 9 **97**

Picasso, Shakespeare and Miyamoto are all legends at their respective crafts. These men share a level of excellence that the rest of the world can only dream of in their wildest flights of fancy. With that being said, this game is destined to further Miyamoto's legend and, perhaps, become his opus. The story, graphics and gameplay are incredible. Nintendo is the master of the medium. Don't put that N64 off any longer... your game has arrived.

G 10 C 10 P 10 M 10 O 10 **99**



Zelda: TOOT
Nintendo64
Nintendo
Action/Adventure

Unlike Bubba and Eggo, I wrote this one off as a "kid's game" the second I saw it — big mistake. This is a fantastic little puzzle/platformer that will probably get eaten alive by the multitude of 3D platformers out there already (*Banjo* primarily). Those with a few extra bucks could do a lot worse than giving this one a spin. I guarantee that if there's a gamer's bone in your body you'll be lovin' it if you give it a chance. Long live Dennis!

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 10 O 7 **94**

Don't overlook this one just because he's so cute it hurts. There's actually a good deal of depth here, along with puzzle-solving and platforming. *Glover* is hard-core, plus it's got Dennis, the blue bouncing bop bag. 3D platformers are a somewhat tired genre on the N64, but *Glover's* not just another clone.

G 7 C 9 P 7 M 9 O 7 **88**

Aww yeah! While you may take this puzzling platformer for no more than a simplistic *Mario 64* rip-off, *Glover* proves to be one of the best Nintendo 64 titles to date. Putting the smack down with some of the best interactive puzzles I have ever seen and insanely creative level design with a flair for subtle humor put this one in a class all its own. THE Nintendo 64 sleeper hit of the year, 'hands' down, and Dennis gets 'Game Character of the Year'!

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 10 **94**



Glover
Nintendo64
Hasbro
3D Platformer

So the framiness is a bit irritating... OK, really annoying, but even with it this game rules! A quest that is only rivaled by the likes of *Zelda*, this is the other N64 game you need to get this year. Stunning graphics, a mammoth storyline of epic proportions (yes, you read that correctly), and fantastic pseudo-action adventure gameplay melded beautifully with rippin' FPS action (minus the framiness, <ugh>). Get ye a 4 meg cart and lock and load — *Turok* is back!

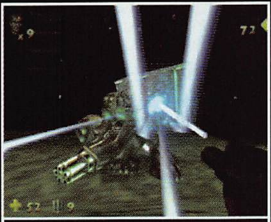
G 10 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 5 **97**

Iguana has really raised the bar with this one. *Turok 2* not only manages to give the PC FPS market a run for its money, but also sets a new standard for the console action game. Ominously spectacular presentation meets with an incredible one-player experience to bring gamers what is arguably one of the best games of the year on any system. Add to the mix the awe-inspiring 4-meg RAM cart and you've got a must-have title on your hands. GO GET IT!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 6 **98**

Except for *Quake* and *Goldeneye*, I don't play many 3D Shooters on consoles. I was also never a fan of the first *Turok*. While *Turok 2* improves over the first *Turok* in terms of graphics and gameplay (mission based), the framey movement seems very much out of place. Spending a weekend with this game doesn't sound appealing to me for some reason, and even with the hi-res visuals that the 4MB adds, it isn't enough to make goo-goo-ga-ga like the two zombies to my left.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 7 **84**



Turok 2
Nintendo64
Acclaim
3D Shooter

Thank you Trey and Matt, and thank you Iguana for this hilariously fun gaming experience. This one's got all the goods from the show, including a TON of choice voice-overs (who would have thought possible on the N64?) and multi-player madness starring just about every character to grace the disaster-ridden streets of South Park. A bit of comic relief was much appreciated by this gamer and I'm quite certain fans of the show will be more than satisfied. Kick ass!

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 9 **87**

Matt and Trey should be living large. This game does a great job of capturing the essence of *South Park* — that obnoxious sense of humor — and cramming it into a cartridge with a bunch of voices. *South Park* fans will find a bunch of familiar faces and lines here (there are 20 hidden characters to unlock for multi-player mode), and this game will probably fly off shelves. Still, if you're a *SP* fan more than a FPS freak, you should rent this one before buying.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 6 O 8 **85**

You will respect Iguana's authoritai! I'm not sure what I think of the actual game, but man, I could play this one for the hysterical voice-overs for days on end... not to mention the humiliation and devastation that is just begging to be had in multi-player mode. Actually, *South Park* turned out to be a pretty good title in the long run. Level design is a bit lacking, imho, but hey, this is *South Park*... The game can get tedious, but if you are a fan of the series, you simply have to snag this one. It @$%*^&# rocks, dude!

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 8 **89**



South Park
N64
Acclaim
First PersonShooter

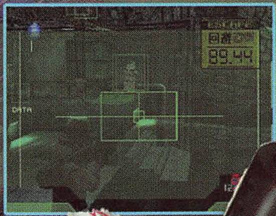


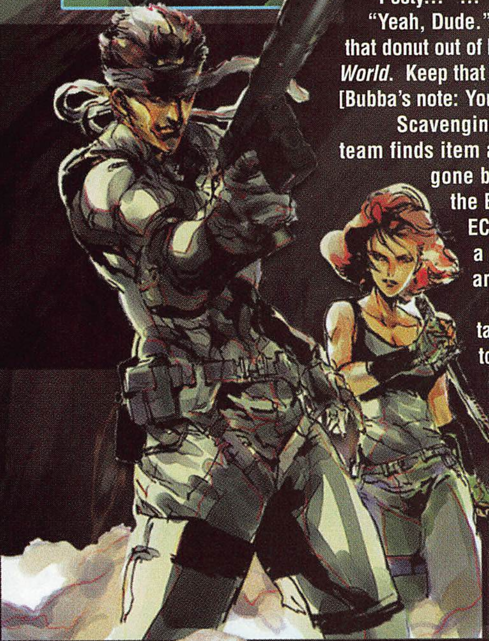


THE FACE OF FIGHTING.
TEKKEN 3™
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation
namco®
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GAMEFAN 1998 BUYER'S GUIDE

(a.k.a. GAMES YOU HAVE TO GET!)







As the dust cleared from another year of video game history, the *GameFan* crew rose once again from the rubble of the demolished cave deep inside Agoura. Kid Fan rallies the troops to the blue and yellow *GameFan* flag. Roll call: Wolfie... "Yo." ECM... "Check." Dangohead... "Check." Eggo... "Check." El Nino... "Si." Reubus... "Yo." Waka... "Waddup?" Cowboy... "Yee-haw." Posty... "..." Super Teeter... "What?" Jace Fury... "Yeah, Dude." Bubba... ?? Bubba... Will somebody get that donut out of his mouth?! Goo... Damn, still with us and he's holding that copy of *Spice World*. Keep that thing away from me!! Now that everybody's present and accounted for [Bubba's note: You forgot Ned!], it's time to take stock of what happened. Everybody report in...

Scavenging through the remnants of the cave for treasures worth preserving, the team finds item after item — each one bringing back memories of the year gone by. Look! It's the *Street Fighter Alpha 2* machine that fell on the Enquirer (and the Roundhouse still doesn't work). Here's ECM's addictively wonderful rainbow-colored slinky. Over there's a ROM of Eidos' *Ninja: Shadows of Darkness*... and look! There's another... and another...

It's time to take all these memories from the past year, and immortalize them. 1998 has seen the arrival of some long awaited games, a ton of sequels, and a whole lot of frisbees. As you scan the long shelves of Christmas titles, you must be wondering... What's worth keeping here? Well, that's what the following pages are for: sorting through the mountain of fourth quarter titles and highlighting the year's best and worst.

Bringing along only the best, it's time for the GameFan crew to regroup and move on. We've got a new cave to furnish.







Banjo-Kazooie





Everybody already knew that Rare had the N64 dialed (*Goldeneye* pretty much saw to that), but it took this game to drive that point home in a 'flaming sword through your tissue paper-like sternum' sort of way. Easily the best 3D platformer ever, eclipsing even the mighty *Mario 64*, *BK* proved that you don't need 4 meg RAM upgrades or a PR/ad blitzkrieg of EA-esque proportions (their marketing budget could feed several small, 3rd world countries for decades).

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo







Bloody Roar

Lions, tigers, and... bunnies, oh my! What an interesting collection of characters to bring forth in a fighting game. But throughout a year that has seen one bad 3D fighter after another, *Bloody Roar* — with its dazzling special effects, top-notch control, and splendid gameplay — places itself above and beyond the majority of today's other fighters (*Tekken* included). If you've been hesitant to buy a 3D fighter this year, treat yourself to an early Xmas gift and get *Bloody Roar*.

Developer: Raizing
Publisher: SCEA







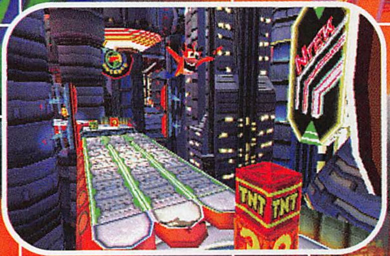




Crash 3: Warped

Now in its third installment, *Crash* may be forging less new territory but certainly isn't losing any steam. Far and away one of the PlayStation's most stunning visual experiences, *Crash 3: Warped* gives fans of the pesky marsupial one more lap around the track. Some will have issues with the repetitive nature and ease of the levels, but the overall product is just what the doctor ordered. I think it may be time to end the series, though, while it is still on top. No need to beat a dead bandicoot.

Developer: Naughty Dog/Universal
Publisher: SCEA





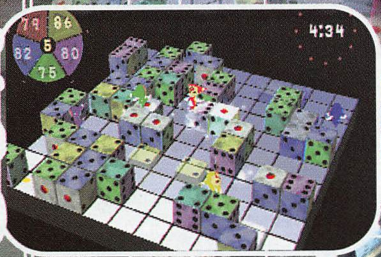






Devil Dice

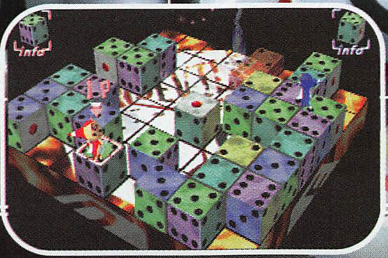


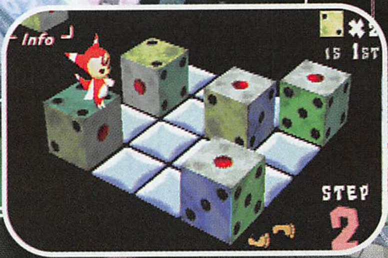


Every year another puzzle game comes along that claims to have finally downed the mighty *Tetris*. While many around GF think that Compile's *Puyo Puyo* series beat it a ways back, now it's official: with the release of THQ's *Devil Dice* (XI in Japan) *Tetris* has finally and irrevocably met its match. While it may be a bit more complex, it has an addiction factor akin to Dangohead's obsession with popping bubble wrap (the boy is sick, sick, sick).

Developer: SCEI
Publisher: THQ







F-Zero X





When Nintendo puts its mind to it, few games in any genre can stand up to their wizardry. Such is the case with the sequel to one of the greatest classics of all time: *F-Zero*. This time featuring blistering 60 FPS speed, zero slowdown in four-player mode, and 30 (!) cars on track at once, this may be the racing game to beat this year. Even Sony's *Gran Turismo* can't compete in sheer speed, and perhaps even in sheer knock-your-socks-off fun factor.

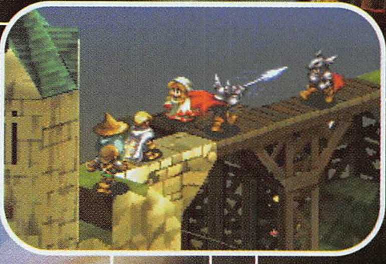
Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo







Final Fantasy Tactics



Better than its flagship sister opus, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Tactics* has truly revolutionized the strategy RPG. With a compelling (if not totally convoluted) story, stunning visuals and an impressive list of character classes, *FF Tactics* successfully transforms your television into a window to another world. Although the linear story draws you toward an inevitable finale, endless hours of fun can be had from random encounters and side quests.

Developer: Square
Publisher: SCEA







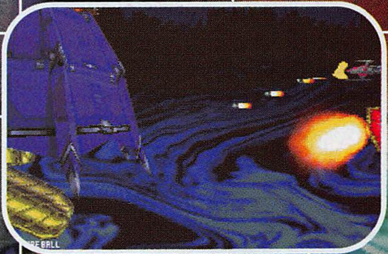


G-Darius

G-Darius

An all but dead genre in the US, Taito's *G-Darius* (wisely snapped up by THQ in the States), proves that, believe it or not, there is still raging life in the shooter genre. Rippingly clean polygon graphics melded perfectly with 'old skool' gameplay, this is a textbook example of where the genre needs to go if it's to survive in the 3D-mad nineties (much to the chagrin of ECM). Blazing visuals, intense Zuntata tunes, and (amazingly) new play mechanics, this is the domestic shooter of the year.

Developer: Taito
Publisher: THQ







Gran Turismo

Gran Turismo

PlayStation

Arguably the greatest racing game ever made, *Gran Turismo* could make a gearhead out of anyone. This game has it all: beautiful graphics, realistic control, cool music, and an unprecedented number of selectable cars — numbering more than 160! With this kind of playability and depth, *Gran Turismo* has forever altered what racing fans will expect from their future racing titles.

Developer: SCEJ
Publisher: SCEA







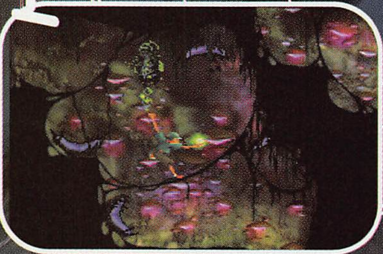
Heart of Darkness

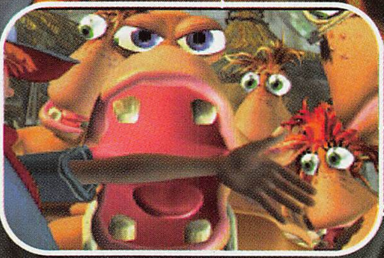




Amazing Studios' *Heart of Darkness* gives us a *Flashback* of old school gameplay that is just *Out of This World.* Tired of rescuing the princess in every other game that comes along? It's time for something different. How about saving your dog for a change? That's right, guide Andy through eight levels of brilliant brain teasers, and you'll be treated to some sweet CG along the way. This sleeper classic has to be seen to be believed.

Developer: Amazing Studios
Publisher: Interplay





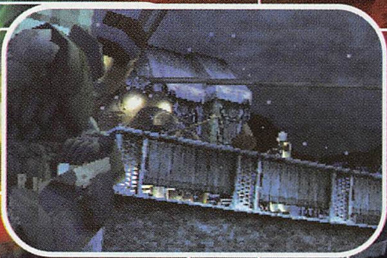


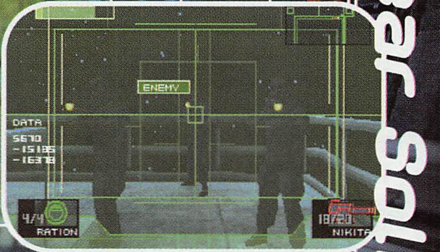
Heart of Darkness

Metal Gear Solid

Imagine a game that combines the best action and espionage flicks, a rich storyline, kick ass characters, and some excellent music, and you basically have what Konami has pronounced as the "World's Best Game." Quite a lofty title, but then again with great action and adventure elements, well placed cut scenes, and innovative use of PlayStation technology, *Metal Gear Solid* is one of the only PlayStation games that has the right to proclaim itself the best of the year.

Developer: Konami
Publisher: Konami









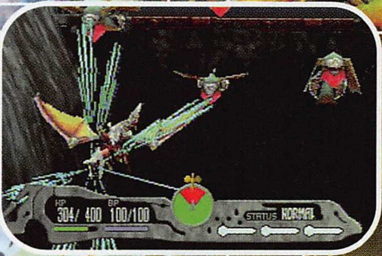


Metal Gear Solid

Panzer Dragoon Saga

Sega took a big gamble bringing its proven shooter beast over to the rather treacherous RPG waters, but Team Andromeda has pulled it off with style. Perhaps the best example of the genre this year, the Saturn's finest RPG hour is a must-play for fans of the shooter and people that generally don't consider themselves role playing fiends. If there's one Saturn game you must have this year, it's this one.

Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega

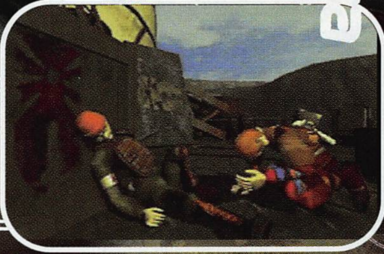




Panzer Dragoon Saga

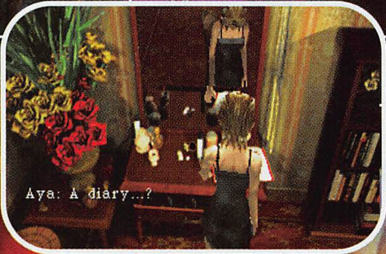






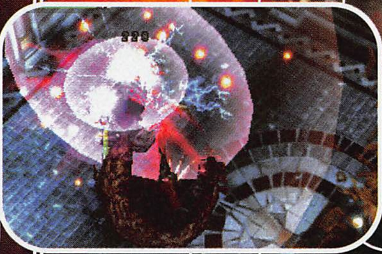
Parasite Eve

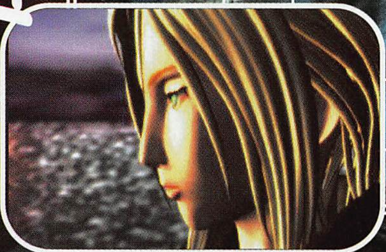
Parasite Eve



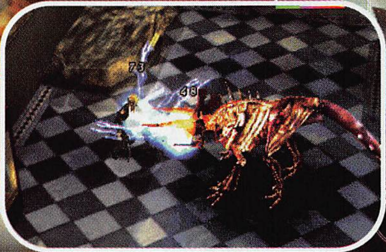
Square's CG is so good it hurts. When somebody higher up figured this out, the idea came along to make a "Cinematic RPG," a game that feels like a movie... the end result? *Parasite Eve* — a mix of cinema, real-time battles, and story. What? The ol' mitochondria are revolting again? People are spontaneously combusting all over New York? Not a problem for Aya Brea, off-duty N.Y. cop destined to save New York from a fiery death by the evil Opera singer, Melissa.

Developer: Square
Publisher: EA-Square





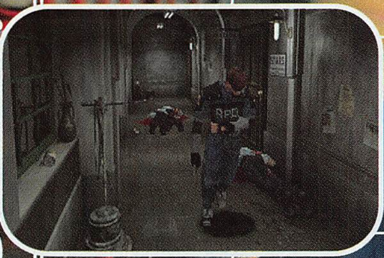




PlayStation

Resident Evil 2

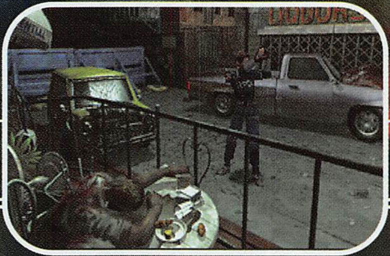


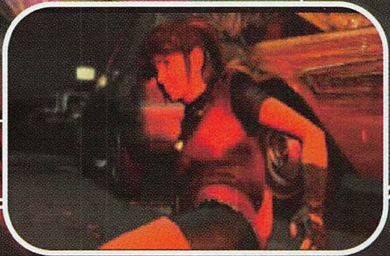


The year 1998 saw Capcom's terrifying sequel to the original ***Resident Evil*** become the best selling PlayStation game of all time. Featuring a revolutionary bi-linear quest spanning 2 CDs, amazing graphics and one of the most chilling soundtracks of all time, ***RE2*** is more than a worthy sequel to the original. With a major motion picture on the way and sequels already in the works, millions of fans anxiously await the next venture into the world of Survival Horror...

Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom





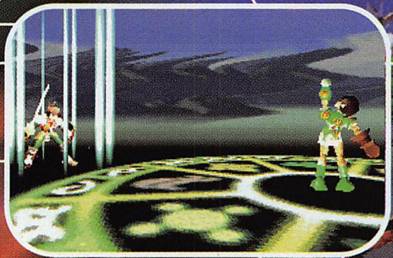


Sega Saturn

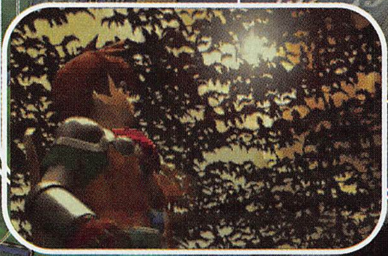
Shining Force 3

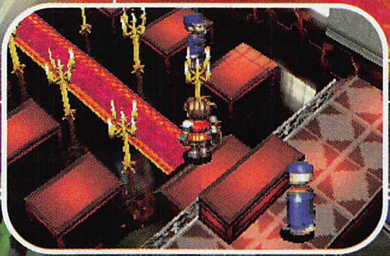
Is anyone surprised by this game's inclusion on the list? The most recent installment in one of the most popular RPG series in gaming, ***Shining Force 3*** is one of the few shining moments in the Saturn's last, dark days. While not as good as its Japanese counterpart, ***SF3*** still manages to grab its players with an interesting tale of revolution, treachery and heroic deeds. The series' first foray into the world of 3D, ***SF3***'s only weakness is its graphics. Every other facet, however, is exemplary, making this one of the best reasons to own the now extinct system.

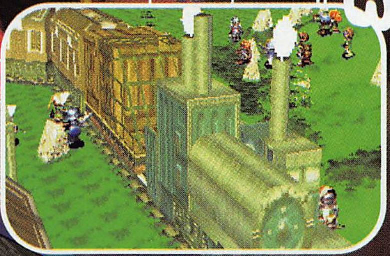
Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega











SkullMonkeys



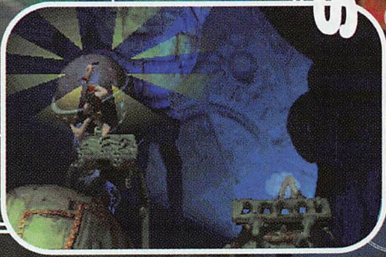
Not only is it one of the only 2D platformers available this year (death to *Punky Skunk*!), it's also one of the best ever! The Neverhood has crafted one of the single most skilled games ever. Though sales weren't exactly brisk, now's your chance to experience one of the greatest (and probably last) of a dying breed. Bow your heads in a moment of silence...

Developer: The Neverhood/Dreamworks
Publisher: Electronic Arts

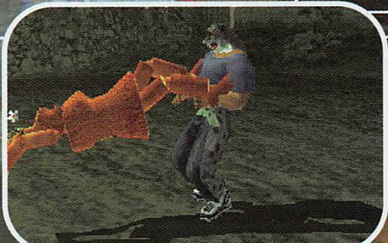








Tekken 3





In a genre glutted with unremarkable titles, *Tekken* still stands out as one of the most impressive. Bested only by *Bloody Roar*, *Tekken 3* is a superb sequel which showcases stellar graphics and fluid motion capture. The character design is fantastic, as are the fighting mechanics. *Tekken 3* also gets high marks for its inclusion of clever play modes, adding needed wrinkles to a wholly unoriginal genre while beefing up replayability.

Developer: Namco
Publisher: Namco





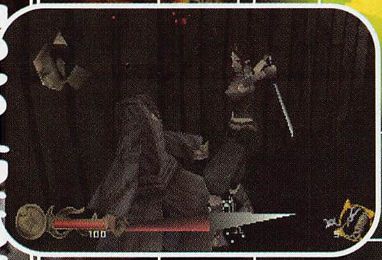


PlayStation

Tenchu

Tenchu, Stealth Assassins





You mean there's life before *Metal Gear*? Yes, *Tenchu Stealth Assassins* beat Konami's favorite child out the door in the sneaky guy action/adventure genre. Scaling up buildings with your trusty grappling hook, poisoning enemies with the evil dango, and leaving a trail of eviscerated bodies... this is just the beginning of a new and unexplored genre. OK, so the voices will make your ears bleed, but *Tenchu* is still a solid title which will sneak its way into many a Christmas stocking.

Developer: Sony Music
Publisher: Activision







GAMEFAN 1998 BUYER'S GUIDE

Nintendo 64

Turok 2

Turok 2: Seeds of Evil

The original *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* was the key title in Acclaim's return to prominence in the console arena. The release of *Turok 2: Seeds of Evil* has left their development studio, Iguana Entertainment, sitting on top of the 3rd party world. Visuals that rival the latest PC accelerators, clever AI and brilliant character design are but a few of the aspects that set *Turok 2* apart from the crowd, making it the must-own title for Nintendo 64 owners.

Developer: Iguana
Publisher: Acclaim











Xenogears





Square sets out to prove they can make a traditional RPG just as well as the next guy. Combine a deep plot, multi-joined character sprites (long live sprites!) and polygonal backgrounds with a combo-driven battle system, anime-like FMV, and mechs for good measure... and you have *Xenogears*, an RPG good enough to make you forget about *Saga Frontier*.

Developer: Square
Publisher: EA-Square







Zelda: OOT



Arguably the single most anticipated game of all time, Nintendo's fifth installment to one of gaming's most beloved series is less a release than a bona-fide gaming event. Pure, unadulterated *Zelda* gameplay is only the beginning to this year's most enjoyable journey. As Miyamoto's latest gaming masterpiece takes its place amongst the greatest games ever, it's sure to find a place in your collection. Toss the boomerang, light the candle, and push that tombstone, the long wait is finally over. Rejoice!



Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo







"Torture Has Never Been So Much Fun"

– *Gamers' Republic*



POUND your enemies to Mush!



FRY him 'til he's CRISP!



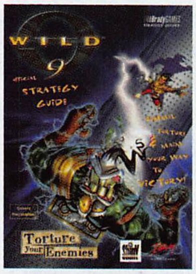
GRIND villains to Pieces!



SMASH 'em while Freefalling!



FEED the beast some Meat!



Official Strategy Guide Now Available



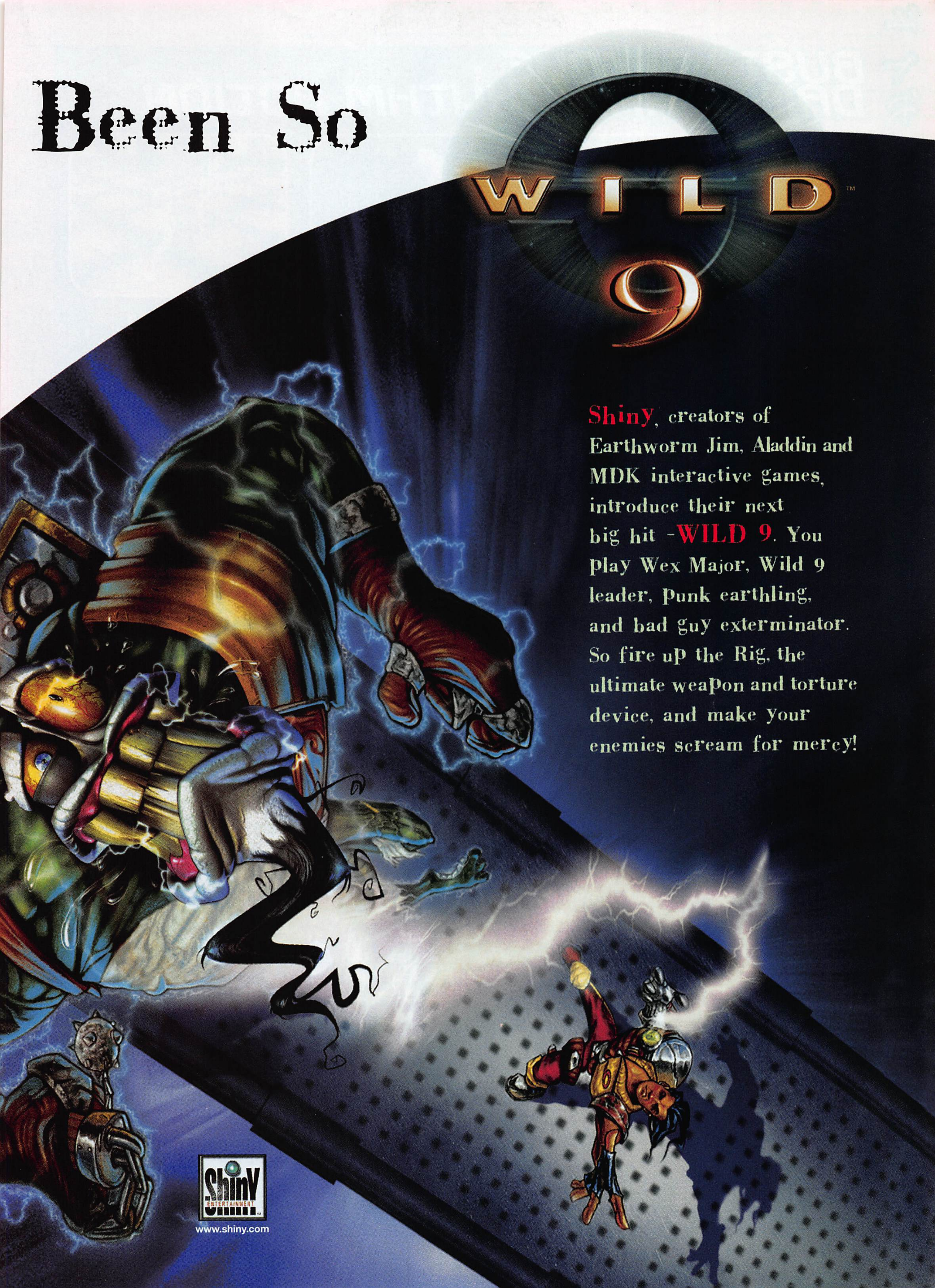
MOW 'em down on your Jetbike!





Available NOW!

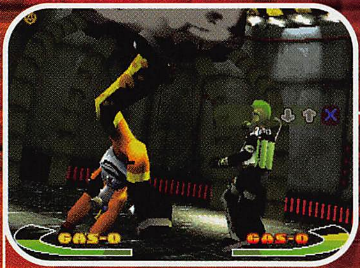
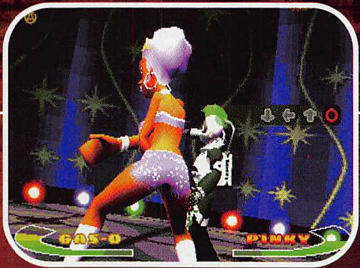
Exclusively for the PlayStation® game console. Call 1-800-INTERPLAY or go to www.interplay.com for more information.



Been So
WILD 9™
Shiny, creators of Earthworm Jim, Aladdin and MDK interactive games, introduce their next big hit -WILD 9. You play Wex Major, Wild 9 leader, punk earthling, and bad guy exterminator. So fire up the Rig, the ultimate weapon and torture device, and make your enemies scream for mercy!
Shiny ENTERTAINMENT
www.shiny.com

BUST A MOVE DANCE AND RHYTHM ACTION

PlayStation


Enix's toe-tapper defies genres. The gameplay is simply keeping the beat, and the music and graphics just scream personality. Hi-res graphics, 60 fps, disco, gangster rap, a blonde in a bunny suit, and music done by Avex Trax. What more could you want? The game is so cool, it's been seen on a projection screen at a midnight rave. If Bust-A-Groove never comes out here and you only buy one import a year, you must check this one out.





GAMEFAN 1998 バイヤーズガイド

COTTON BOOMERANG

Sega Saturn





The best import side-scrolling shooter of the year comes in the form of Success' Cotton Boomerang. Expanding on the stellar Cotton 2, Boomerang modifies some of the game play elements, ramps up the animation, and cranks the difficulty through the roof! Featuring eye-searing color, an enchanting score, and more action than you can shake a broomstick at.

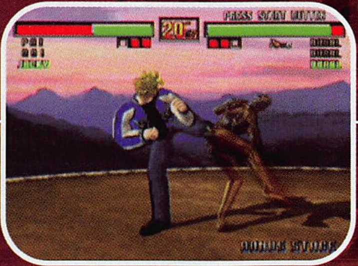
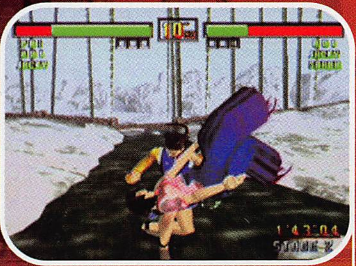






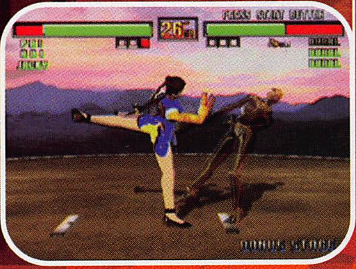
VIRTUA FIGHTER 3tb

Dreamcast


A last minute addition to the 'Top 10' (explaining it's lack of alphabetical order compliance), *VF3tb* explodes onto Sega's Dreamcast with all the force and fanfare that you'd expect. Nigh-unbelievable frame rate, resolution, and color depth that, until now, only the most powerful arcade hardware could manage (no, not even 3D acclerated PC's can approach this) *VF3tb* has enthralled everyone that's gotten past the initially steep learning curve. But once you're in, its ultra-tight control, coupled with gameplay that knows almost no depths, easily makes it one of the ten best import games of the year.





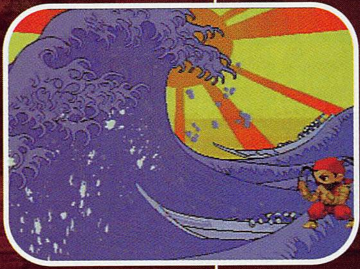
POCKET FIGHTER







Merciless, mighty, and...cute?!? Only Capcom would conceive of such a crazy idea of having super- deformed Street Fighter characters in a fighting game, and only Capcom could make it so darn fun! With delightful animations, zany attacks, awesome backgrounds, and a simple but fun combat system, Pocket Fighter is a must for all import lovers regardless if you're a fighting fiend or not.








Sega Saturn

POITER'S POINT 2

PlayStation





For those unfortunate few that have been afflicted with some coma-like disease which prevents you from being aware of anything, Poiter's Point (Poy Poy in the US) was one of the best multi-player games for the PlayStation. Combining Bomberman-like gameplay, with unique power-ups, weapons, and characters, Poiter's Point 2 ups the ante by adding even more powerups, characters, and multi-level stages. And like Bomberman, Poiter's Point 2's strength lies in its multiplayer aspect. If you're looking for a great multiplayer import game, Poiter's Point 2 is the game you need.





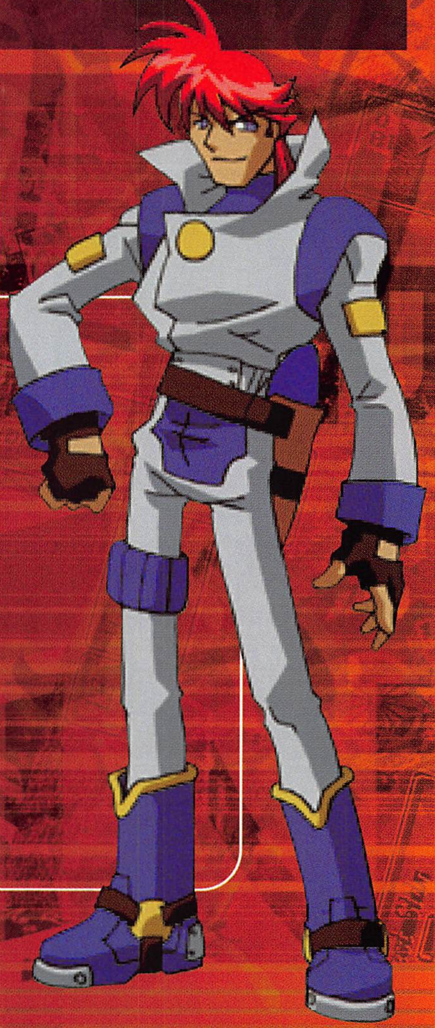
RADIANT SILVERGUN

Sega Saturn



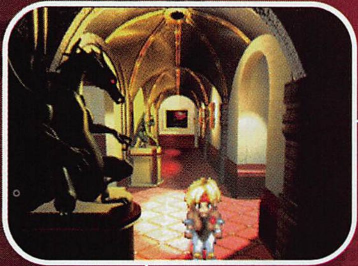

Although this genre is a smoking ruin in the US, it's storming ahead in Japan with Treasure leading the assault! RS is perhaps the greatest shooter in the history of the genre and even tops their previous efforts, including Guardian Heroes and even the mighty Gunstar Heroes. As far as blasters go, they don't get much better than this; arcade or otherwise. If there's one import you HAVE to nab this year, it's Radiant Silvergun.

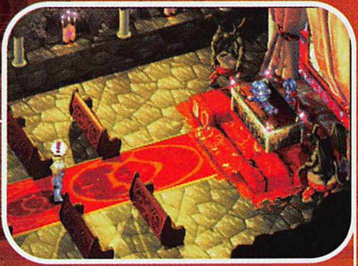




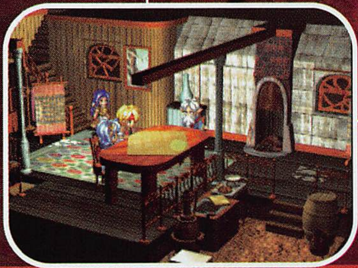
STAR OCEAN 2

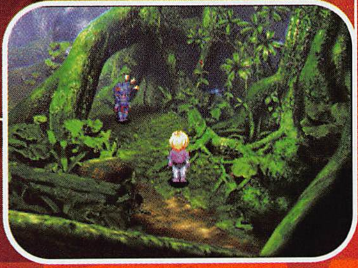
PlayStation






What was the biggest hype of the third quarter, this RPG won the hearts of over 3/4 the gaming population in Japan. Enix has gone back to thier roots and brought back a game that wil have you playing for literally a year because of the eighty, YES EIGHTY ENDINGS! Even the most avid and hard-core RPGer will have oodles of replay value with this one folks. With an all-new character interaction system called 'Private Actions', you can choose how to interact with your party members. Ending 42...43...44... ZZzzZZZzz....

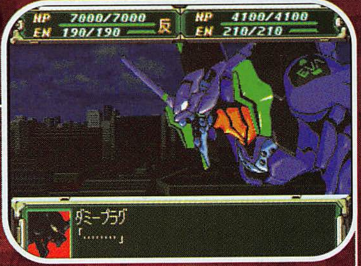




SUPER ROBOT WARS F

Sega Saturn





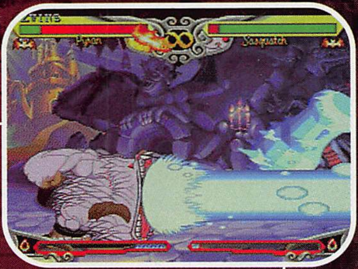
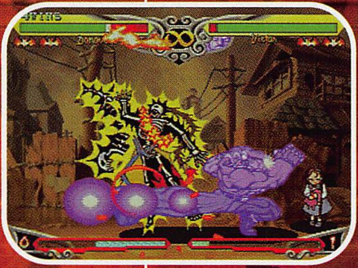
Regardless of the extremely long title, Super Robot Wars F Operation Complete is a game for only the die hard import fans. With super deformed characters, more than half the cast of all Japanese anime robots, authentic voice acting as well as music from each respective anime coupled with old school 2D graphics, you're not an import freak till you get this game.




VAMPIRE SAVIOR

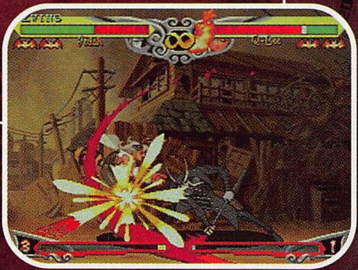
Sega Saturn



Arguably the best of the Darkstalker series, the 3rd installment of the Darkstalkers series is flawlessly ported for Saturn fighting fanatics. While Capcom should be applauded for the seamless animation, faster-than-the-arcade loading times, and interesting new characters, Capcom deserves a standing ovation for the inclusion of English text for US gamers. If you're a Saturn importee, you'll be hating yourself every morning if you don't purchase this baby.



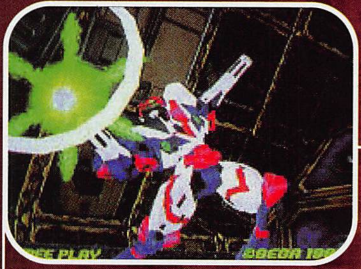
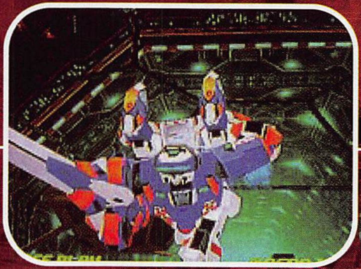
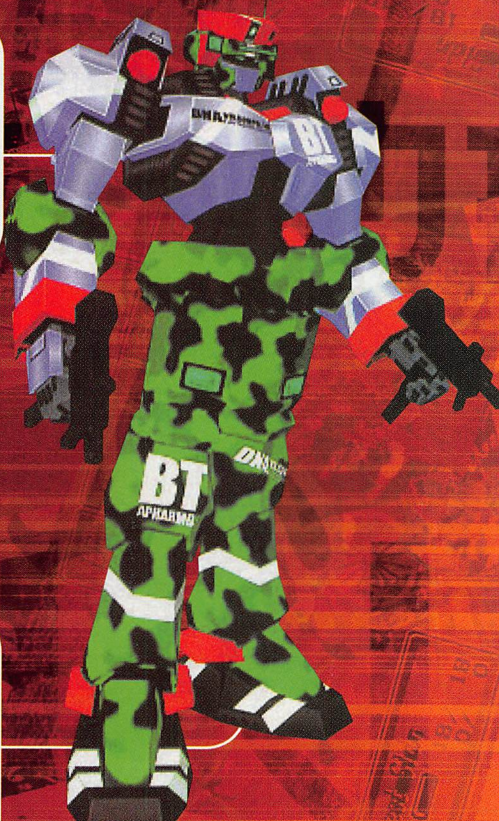



GAMEFAN 1998 ベイヤーズ ガイド

VIRTUAL ON 2

ARCADE

Arcade

Why in the name of Odin's left eye won't this game (Ed's Note: thank you Dennis Miller), of all arcade games in the world, come out in the US? Of course we here at Gamefan don't expect anyone to shell out twenty-four grand for a V.O.O.T. but if you can track down some hardy arcade owner that holds this dream machine (two locations in the US are known by GF), it would be a crime not to spend a couple of bucks on perhaps, the best arcade game this year.




GENRES

After we got done tabluating and calculating which games deserved spots in our esteemed Top 20, we took a big step back and looked at the overall picture. Seeing that certain genres were better represented than others, we took a long hard look at what other titles, broken down by game type, deserve mention if you only like a particular type of game. For instance ECM's rabid obsession with 'kill 'em all' shooters, and Eggo's rather unhealthy love of all things RPG (I swear the boy is in love with Aya Brea—Shidoshi would be proud!). So here they are, broken down by category, the other domestic games you 'need' to get if you or your parents have more money than they know what to do with.

ACTION ADVENTURE

Abe's Exxodus
PlayStation

Apocalypse
PlayStation

Medievil
PlayStation

ROLE PLAYING

Tales of Destiny
PlayStation

Granstream Saga
PlayStation

Quest 64
Nintendo 64

FIGHTING

Dead or Alive
PlayStation

Pocket Fighter
PlayStation

Rival Schools
PlayStation

SHOOTERS

Einhander
PlayStation

Thunder Force V
PlayStation

Assault
PlayStation

RACING

Cool Boarders 3
PlayStation

Rally Cross 2
PlayStation

Iggy's Wrecking Balls
Nintendo 64

SPORTS

NFL Blitz
Nintendo 64

NHL '99
PlayStation

Madden '99
Nintendo 64

PUZZLE

Roll Away
PlayStation

Lode Runner
PlayStation

Bust-A-Move
Nintendo 64

STRATEGY / SIM

Kartia
PlayStation

Kagero - Deception II
PlayStation

Theme Hospital
PlayStation

3D SHOOTING

N20
PlayStation

Forsaken
Nintendo 64

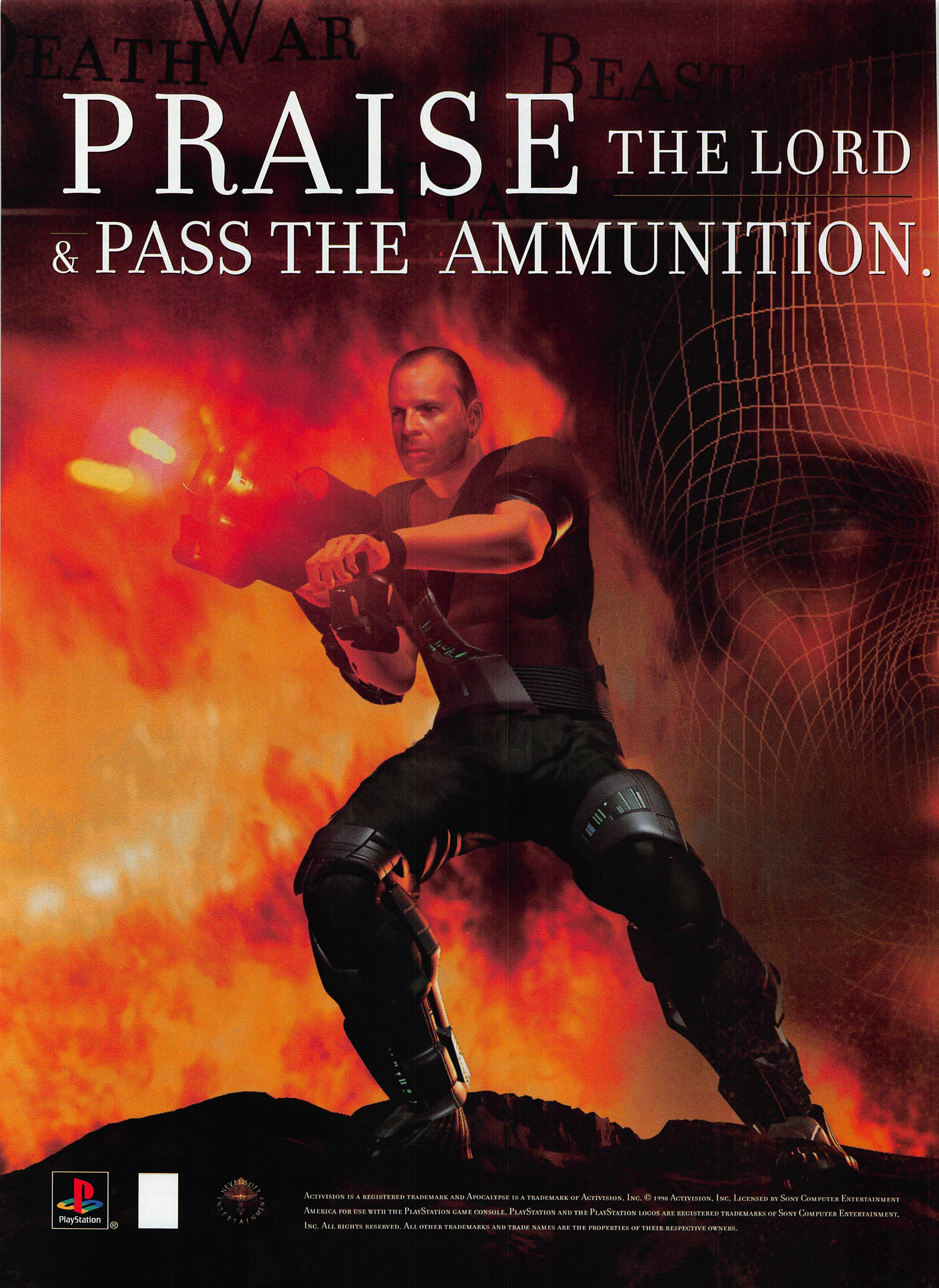
V8
PlayStation

PLATFORM

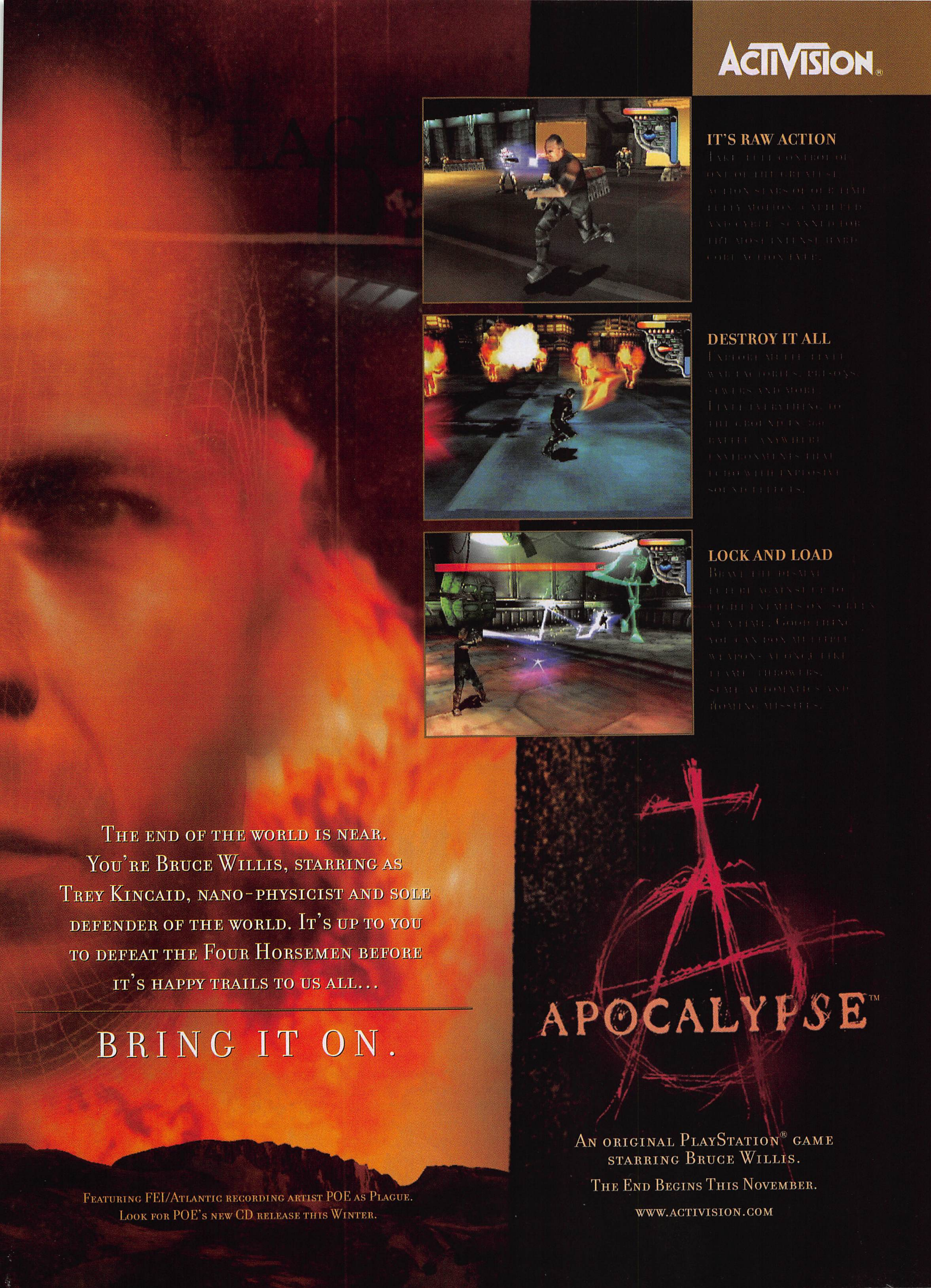
Spyro
PlayStation

Wild 9
PlayStation

Glover
Nintendo 64



DEATH
WAR
BEAST
PRAISE THE LORD
& PASS THE AMMUNITION.
PlayStation
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IT'S RAW ACTION
DESTROY IT ALL
LOCK AND LOAD
THE END OF THE WORLD IS NEAR. YOU'RE BRUCE WILLIS, STARRING AS TREY KINCAID, NANO-PHYSICIST AND SOLE DEFENDER OF THE WORLD. IT'S UP TO YOU TO DEFEAT THE FOUR HORSEMEN BEFORE IT'S HAPPY TRAILS TO US ALL...
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ECM

Hardcore

- Dreamcast arrives! Sega is back! All is right with the world!!!
- GameBoy Color arrives! It's now actually worth owning a GameBoy!
- Shooters thrive in Japan. I have a reason for going to work each day...oh, and for living too.
- The mullet is slain! Gamers are once again free to think for themselves!!!
- NeoGeo Pocket arrives! SNK is back! All is right with the world!!!
- I'm actually downgraded from severely jaded to moderately cynical by the GameFan staff.

Weaksauce

- Shooters? What shooters? Who needs shooters in the US...<grrrrr>.
- 2D platformers? What 2D platformers? Who needs 2D platformers in the US...<double grrrrrr>.
- The death of the domestic Saturn due to poor marketing (lame excuse) and utter and complete apathy on the part of the US gamer (I use that term quite loosely).
- Realizing that Reubus is actually capable of thriving on Pepsi as his sole source of nourishment (just imagine what this boy looks like...<shudder>).

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Final Fantasy Tactics - PS
2. Skullmonkeys - PS
3. Turok 2 - N64
4. Devil Dice - PS
5. Zelda: OOT - N64
6. Panzer Dragoon Saga - SS
7. G-Darius - PS
8. Medievil - PS
9. Apocalypse - PS
10. F-Zero X - N64

Top 10 Japan

1. Radiant Silvergun - SS
2. Metal Slug 2 - Neo Geo
3. Virtua Fighter 3tb - DC
4. Cotton Boomerang - SS
5. Vampire Savior - SS
6. Pocket Fighter - SS
7. Blazing Star - Neo Geo
8. Virtual On 2 (VOOT) - Arcade
9. Battle Garegga - SS
10. Grandia - SS

ECM's Rant

Looking at the various and sundry games I picked as the 'must-have' titles of the year, I'm almost a little frightened. See, this is the first year in quite some time that a Sega platform didn't capture most of my gaming attention in the domestic arena (import was a bit different, heh). I guess it's time to accept that Sony has indeed made the move to king of the hill in the US market, albeit without much help from their own software; 'games' like *Tomba* and *Cardinal Syn* don't do much for your cause...but I digress. And after years of skepticism, even Nintendo managed to knock my hat off more than once with a little help from UK wunderkind Rare. Not bad when my semi-official nick around the office is the Jaded Gamer...

Stunningly, companies like THQ and Square managed to capture top spots; two companies you wouldn't have caught me dead with a year ago (yeah, yeah, all you 'Square-heads' can calm down lest I'm forced to remind you of the tragedy that is *Saga Frontier*, <shudder>).

Ah, but what about once mighty Sega? What has become of the 'console of the hardcore gamer' you ask with plaintive eyes and weeping heart. The import market was all SEGA! Arcade-perfect Capcom translations, hot shooters and the utterly astonishing *Grandia* (though released late, late last year, I still feel compelled to include it — so there!) made it the console of choice for the hard core with Treasure's finest, *Radiant Silvergun*, leading the pack. I'll spare you the requisite, "If Sega had only released <insert game name here> in the States, they'd be in the thick of it" speech (I can hear the sighs of relief from the assembled reader base as well as the lucky Sega execs that will, for once, be spared that tirade). And for the lucky few that have had a chance to play AM3's latest Model 3 mech-fest, VOOT, little explanation is needed (though I bet Dangohead would be glad to educate you on its virtues).

While it was a pretty good year for games, some things led me to shed a tear for times past. With the exception of *Skullmonkeys* this year, the traditional 2D, sprite-stocked, parallax-pushin' platformer seems near-extinction (there was also *Punky Skunk*, but we won't go there, <ack>). This once mighty genre (indeed the king of kings) has seemingly taken a mortal blow from its new-fangled counterpart: the 3D platformer. While games like *Banjo-Kazooie* are incredible in their own right, I can't help but feel that a part of video game history is fast slipping beneath the waves of apathy. God help us all...

El Niño's Rant

I look at our top 20 list and realize that many of my favorite games came out this year. My interest in the fighting and driving genres was rekindled by the likes of *Tekken 3*, *Bloody Roar*, and *Gran Turismo* while bold titles such as *Zelda*, *Metal Gear Solid*, and *Fallout 2* (for the PC) gave me reason to froth at the mouth (how's that for a nice image?). As a sports nut, it was exciting to see a good title show up on a Nintendo machine! *All Star Baseball*, *NHL 99*, and *Madden 99* proved to me that the N64 is a sports gaming machine and the impressiveness of *Ken Griffey Baseball* and *NBA Courtside* gave me hope that Nintendo is making strides toward putting out some great sports games of their own.

Shockingly, the lowest point came in June, at E3. If those are the only games I have to look forward to for next year, then I'm bummin'. With little to excite me, E3 proved something I already expected: Like Hollywood, the gaming industry is moving away from daring and creative projects and towards uninspired, "safe" drivel in hopes of capturing larger audiences. When you stop catering to the niche genres, then you rob the industry of its personality and, ultimately, deprive the consumer of fresh, quality products.

Even greater was my disappointment with this year's crop of RPGs. With the exception of *Final Fantasy Tactics* (*Zelda* is NOT an RPG!), consoles offered nothing. The only good RPGs could be found on the PC, which seems to be the only place U.S. companies seem to be willing to develop them — a great loss for console gamers. I'd like to end my sniveling by saying that the most disappointing title of the year was the mucho overhyped *Res 2*. This quickie knock-off is an insult to anyone who loved the first title. You can't hide a game's length deficiency by simply switching characters and reversing the order. Shame on you, Capcom!

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Final Fantasy Tactics - PS
2. Gran Turismo - PS
3. Fallout 2 - PC
4. Might & Magic VI - PC
5. Devil Dice - PS
6. Tekken 3 - PS
7. Bloody Roar - PS
8. Shining Force 3 - SS
9. Medievil - PS
10. Theme Hospital - PS

Top 10 Sports

1. NHL 99 - PS
2. Hot Shots Golf - PS
3. Madden 99 - N64
4. International Superstar Soccer - PS
5. All Star Baseball '99 - N64
6. NCAA Football 99 - PS
7. FIFA: World Cup 99 - PS
8. NFL Blitz - N64
9. GameDay '99 - PS
10. VR Baseball '99 - PS

Hardcore

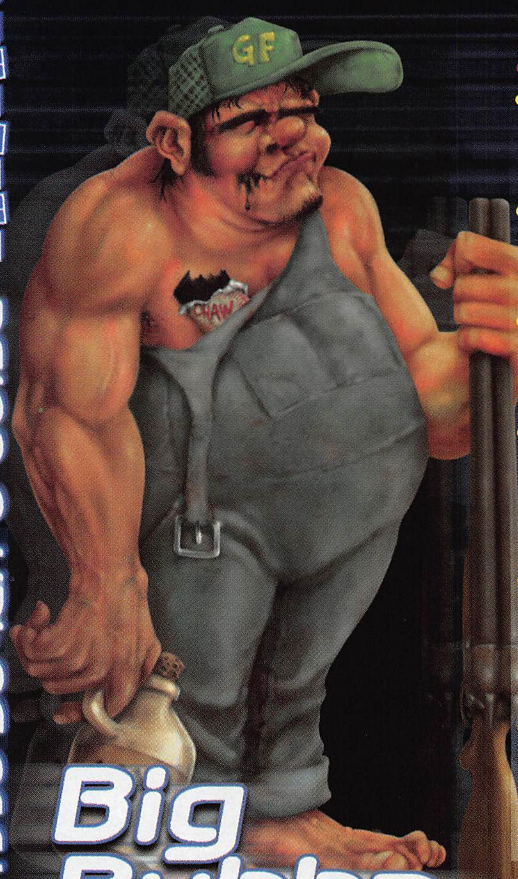
- Dreamcast is here, so maybe I'll get to see a *Phantasy Star* game!
- *Fallout 2* and *Might & Magic VI* gave me my RPG fix that couldn't be supplied by the consoles.
- Cool sports titles on the N64? I must be dreaming.
- The Mullet was trimmed and then all was right in the world.
- *Devil Dice* gave me insomnia (is that a good thing?)
- DVD machines will be able to play games!
- GameFan moved into new digs. Posty gets a La-Z-Boy and The Clapper.

Weaksauce

- Still no *Pirates Gold!* for the 32-bit. Come on Microprose, how 'bout a little somethin' for the people?
- *Grandia* never made it stateside...
- The Mullet may be trimmed, but it still grows...
- E3. E3. E3.
- *Resident Evil* didn't live up to the hype.
- MGM put off development of *Rollerball*.
- My DVD player doesn't have the chip to play games...
- Little Billy just couldn't hang on...



El Niño



Big Bubba

Hardcore

- Sonic Team. I don't care what you think of the Dreamcast, these guys are gaming gods.
- The Nintendo 64's phattie 4meg RAM Pack. It's all about *Turok 2* in high res!
- El Niño's screen savers...I'll leave that one to your imagination..
- The gang at Neversoft and their amazing brand of digital salvation that is *Apocalypse*.
- Take 2's acquisition of *Grand Theft Auto* and it's subsequent publication in the states.
- Tricia at Eidos and her quote regarding ECM's performance on Ninja... too funny.

Weaksauce

- Sequels, clones, and licensees. Time for some originality out there, people.
- EA giving *Thrill Kill* the axe... come on, guys, a little S&M never hurt anyone...at least not past the point of some sadistic enjoyment....
- Disk One of Two "containing more than enough action and excitement for review purposes"...get the #%& outta here...
- The schmoe who deleted my hard drive.. you know who you are...and one day, oh yes...I will find you! Beware the rock.

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Turok 2: Seeds of Evil - N64
2. Skullmonkeys - PS
3. Madden 99 - N64
4. Apocalypse - PS
5. NFL Blitz - N64
6. Metal Gear Solid - PS
7. Thrill Kill - PS
8. Twisted Metal 3 - PS
9. World Cup 98 - PS
10. Glover - N64

Top 10 PC

1. Unreal
2. Total Annihilation: CC
3. Tetrinet
4. Fallout 2
5. Shogo
6. Rainbow 6
7. Plane Crazy
8. SiN
9. Moto Racer 2
10. Heretic 2

Big Bubba's Rant

Man, I tell ya what... it's hard to believe I'm sitting here giving my thoughts on the year in gaming. New to the whole Video Game Mag circuit, these past few months have been a blur for me... like a kid in a candy store, I've gotten a chance to see some of the game industry's best offerings... and some of their worst. It's been quite a ride to say the least.

In the time I've been here, I've seen a lot of interesting things happen both in the industry (such as the announcement and pre-release hype behind the Sega Dreamcast), and around the office (like witnessing Teeter's infamous 'bee' episode), but more often than not, I'm taking notes on what I feel are pivotal changes in an industry that, whether we admit it or not, is going though some serious growing pains.

This has been both a blessing in that we are looking at a wealth of new software, but at the same time a curse, in the arrival and consequent battle between mundane and unoriginal titles struggling to gain a share in an increasingly simplistic market. Yes, my friends, the clone wars aren't just a piece of *Star Wars* history, they are a painful reality of gaming existence.

In one sense, the type of games most people enjoy have been hitting hard, but at the same time, games have been hardly hitting in the areas of innovation. Personally, I find myself growing quite tired of the same-old, same-old and think it is high time we see something different. 'Course, I kind of feel stupid making such a comment, because it's not exactly like I know what that something is... but I am still certain that it needs to arrive.

Will it be the Dreamcast? Maybe even PlayStation 2? Let's hope so. I for one am downright giddy at the thought of what these machines can offer us as gamers, but I am also straight scared that if they let us down, the industry as a whole could be headed for hard times. If this jump in technology produces anything less than phenomenal software, you'll see some sad faces on some of gaming's oldest campers, and that will, regardless of their numbers, have a lasting impact on the attitude of the public towards Video Gaming.

Not that a reality check would be a bad thing. If you ask me, gaming is waaay past due on a good kick in the ass, because despite the huge number of titles that made their way to store shelves, there were only a handful of games that really stood out as 'must have.' I think that says a lot about the direction of game development, and it really frightens me. Hopefully, developers will start taking note of this trend and stop thinking about what has worked in the past, and start looking at what they can make work in the future, because it is the only way we will ever move forward.

1998 represented a significant change in the industry. The growing mainstream popularity of gaming has caused it to explode to the forefront of pop culture. Let's hope 1999 does not see Video Gaming sell out to Da Man.

Dangohead's Rant

1998 was a year which had its share of high points, but was offset by a greater number of disappointments. While the struggle for power between the PlayStation and the N64 went on (with the PS in a seemingly large lead), only the die-harders out there noticed the demise of the Saturn. The death of this system was clouded even more so by Sega's announcement of their new 128-bit console, the Dreamcast. With anticipation for the Dreamcast at house-burning levels, the Saturn slowly deteriorated, and only a small portion of the gaming public even turned a head. Very few will realize the games they missed on the Saturn: *Guardian Heroes*, *DragonForce*, *Legend of Oasis*, the *Panzer* series, the *Shining* RPG series, *Fighter's Megamix*, all the Sega arcade ports (except *House of the Dead*, ugh), all Capcom fighters, and the list goes on... Sure, the Saturn had a number of bad games, but the ratio of good to bad games on the Saturn is equal to or even better than the PlayStation's ratio of good to bad games. Oh well... rest in peace, Sega Saturn.

In any case, my Top Tens may need some explanation, so hopefully the space I have left will be enough. Some might question why I place *Metal Gear Solid* over *Zelda TOOT*, and I'm sure those religious *Zelda* fans will chase me around with a branding iron. But in the end, *Metal Gear Solid* won out just because it appeals to me much more due to its darker, more mature story. Not to say *Zelda* is for an audience 12 and under only. In any case, both games are worth purchasing and whichever you buy, you'll be a very content gamer (heck, get both if ya can!).

I've also included an Arcade Top Ten, and with little surprise, Sega dominates my list here. I've played VOOT for a whole day, which is enough for this one and only dango to claim the game as my arcade pick of the year. *Gauntlet Legends* is a refreshing change from the "assembly line" of arcade fighters. *Magic the Gathering: Armageddon* is a very cool game though it will be hard to find. Where's *Blitz '99?* Sure, *Blitz '99* is a great game, but I've decided to leave out arcade games with home ports. All in all, I hope the arcade industry doesn't die out or concede victory to its console siblings.

No Top Ten Imports dango? Since I wanted to provide an arcade Top Ten, I don't have any room for a Top Ten Imports, so I'll just list some of my favorites here. They include the highly underrated *Brave Fencer Musashiden* (yes, it's worth buying BESIDES the FF8 demo), *Tenchu* (screw the US voices), *Super Robot Wars F Operation Complete*, and of course the badly "we really need more of this type of game" *Metal Slug 2*.

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Metal Gear Solid - PS
2. Zelda 64: TOOT - N64
3. Bloody Roar - PS
4. Panzer Saga - SS
5. Devil Dice - PS
6. Banjo-Kazooie - N64
7. Hot Shots Golf - PS
8. Forsaken - N64
9. Tales of Destiny - PS
10. Shining Force III - SS

Top 10 Arcade

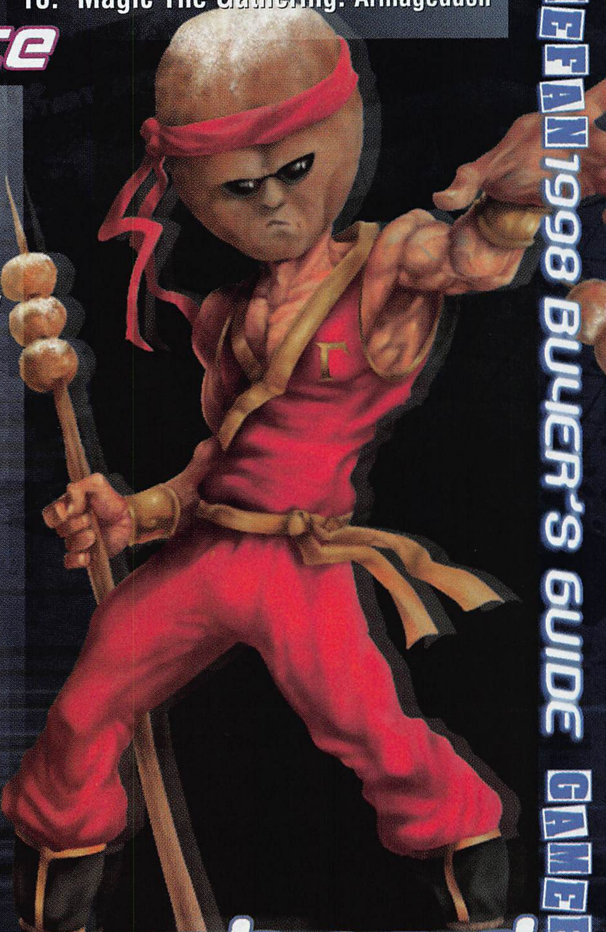
1. Virtual On Oratorio Tangram
2. Daytona 2
3. Bloody Roar 2
4. Gauntlet Legends
5. Soul Calibur
6. Time Crisis 2
7. Get Bass Fishing
8. Marvel vs. Capcom
9. Sega Rally 2
10. Magic The Gathering: Armageddon

Hardcore

- Dreamcast: Can you say a new adventure just on the horizon?!?
- Playing *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* for a whole day (ARCADE MADNESS!)
- *Metal Gear Solid*: No doubt the Game of the Year... 'nuff said.
- *Zelda 64: The Ocarina of Time*: About time a *Zelda* for the N64 comes out.
- *Bloody Roar*: A fighter on the PS better than *Tekken 3*? You bet.
- *Brave Fencer Musashiden*: Yes, it is definitely worth buying aside from the *Final Fantasy 8* demo.

Weaksauce

- *Samurai Shodown 64*: Waah! Why SNK did you kill the king of fencing fighting?!?!
- Movie-to-Video Game Translations: *Judge Dredd* and *The 5th Element*... need I churn your stomach more?
- Death of the Saturn: Never will US Saturn owners see *Radiant Silvergun*, *Vampire Savior* and others. <sniff>
- Arcade Industy Dying: As arcade machines wither away, redemption machines grow in numbers... NO!



Dangohead



Hardcore

- Square's releasing bits and pieces of *Final Fantasy VIII* to the public to feed the need for *Final Fantasy.*
- Hideo Kojima for realizing his dream and presenting gamers with his vision in a very Solid title.
- Sony's release of the Dual Shock controller, perhaps the best peripheral ever made.
- Thank god! Bullfrog for starting production on a new *Populous*, this one 3D accelerated.
- Eidos' decision to terminate *Fighting Force 64.*
- Crystal Dynamics for postponing the release of *Legacy of Kain: SoulReaver*, instead of rushing it out by Christmas.

Weaksauce

- Sega of America's decision not to bring *Virtual On 2* to U.S. shores.
- The ton of game developers at E3 who chose to release yet more 3D corridor shooters (Bleech!).
- Bullfrog, for making me wait till next year to play that 3D accelerated version of *Populous.*
- *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins'* American voice actors.
- Game developers who made *Spice World.*
- Gamers who bought *Spice World.*
- Sega's choice of name for their 128-bit fishing console.

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Heart of Darkness - PS
2. Metal Gear Solid - PS
3. Resident Evil 2 - PS
4. Kagero: Deception II - PS
5. Banjo Kazooie - N64
6. Parasite Eve - PS
7. Final Fantasy Tactics - PS
8. Gran Turismo - PS
9. Skull Monkeys - PS
10. Glover - N64

Top 10 Japan

1. Virtual On Oratorio Tangram - Arcade
2. Radiant Silvergun - SS
3. Tenchu - PS
4. Bust A Move Dance & Rhythm Action - PS
5. FF8 Demo (Brave Fencer Musashiden) - PS
6. Metal Slug 2 - Neo
7. Vampire Savior - SS
8. Dragon Force 2 - SS
9. Crisis Beat - PS
10. Beatmania - PS

Eggo's Rant

Hey, you can close your mouth now. No, *Zelda* and *Metal Gear Solid* aren't my Games of the Year; and yes, *Deception II* did make my top five. So here's the story, *Heart of Darkness* — five plus years in the making — has top-notch production values. Almost every aspect of the game is perfect; its few faults being length and replay value. But the gameplay experience is so memorable that I can't stop talking about this game.

Konami's PlayStation-seller comes in at #2 instead of #1, maybe because Dave sells out to 'Da Man' in the happy ending (finish it, and you will understand). It's been so long since I heard the cry, "Ada, Wait!!!" that I almost forgot *Resident Evil 2* flew out of the gate early this year, busting chops and smashing records like there's no tomorrow. Capcom, Wait!

The sleeper I've chosen to champion this year is *Kagero: Deception II*. This game is just fun to play and the replay value is exceptional. It's always exciting to be the bad guy in a video game, and *Deception II* is the only game I know of where you can trap a small child then knock a pillar onto him when his mom comes to help. Maybe it's not the nicest thing to do, but I got some really twisted satisfaction out of it. And the more you finish the game, the more traps you're given access to. The more traps you get, the better your combos become. The Spring Floor knocks an unwary foe up into the Ceiling Fan (let grind for 5 seconds), then Evil Kick him into the Iron Maiden, and have a Flare Rock (the coup de gras) ready to greet him when our slightly porous friend stumbles out of the Maiden. The more you play *Deception II*, the more you can't put it down.

Import-wise, there was a moment of silence in the *GameFan* office when we found out there were no plans to bring *Virtual On 2* to American arcade shores. It's too bad too, now I'll have to wait probably half a year before I can smoke ECM's Apharmd and Dangohead's Raiden with my Bal Bados in *VOOT* on Dreamcast. *Virtual On 2* is reason #2 to buy a Dreamcast (and is it me or does that name sound like a secret fishing technique?).

Radiant Silvergun forced me to dust off my Saturn just so I could swim through wave after wave of bullets, only to run into yet another seemingly-impossible-yet-you're-able-to-find-a-way-through-it wall of bullets. Treasure is in top-form (even for Treasure) in this be-all-end-all of console shooters, full of bullets and multiple levels of parallax. And that end boss... This one leaves all the Saturn owners misty-eyed.

Lastly, I favor the import *Tenchu* over the domestic because: 1) the voice-acting and 2) the AI improvement. As far as voice acting goes, the Japanese *Tenchu* had Sho Kosugi, and the U.S. *Tenchu* has "Loahd Gohda shay you mush trai hahder." The "improved" AI in the domestic version makes it painstakingly difficult to finish levels without being seen. Do you want games painstakingly difficult or just plain fun?

Having spent exactly half the year (to the day!) not in the custody of those fine, upstanding folk at *GameFan*, I was once just an ordinary gamer. Unable to taste the fruit of the Chicken Tree before, my gaming was usually limited to rentals, borrowed games and the (in)famous store switching technique. But now I've left those dark days far, far behind me; I now look forward to what treasures o' gaming goodness '99 may bring with it. I must say that, overall, 1998 was quite the year for the gaming connoisseur. Let's examine this, shall we?

Coming as a surprise to absolutely no-one, *Zelda: TOOT* takes my top spot... by a LARGE margin. The most anticipated game ever makes its grand debut on the N64 with style, class and enough gameplay to satisfy even the most jaded gamer (maybe even ECM). The wait's been a long one, but it's finally over. Sit down, plug in and relish it while you can, because it might be another six years.

As you might have noticed, not all the games on my magical list are console titles. What's that? Sacrilege? Oh come on, a game's a game, and I refuse to bring the system wars into this. *StarCraft* is far and away the best PC game I've ever experienced (one... more... game...) and the newest *SF* game, *Alpha 3*, is enough of an improvement to satisfy fans until the next one.

What really took me by surprise were the two racers, *Gran Turismo* and *F-Zero X*. Now, I don't really consider myself a huge racing fan (unless we're talking racers of the 'wacky' variety, such as *MarioKart* and the like) but these two really impressed me. While *Turismo* is definitely the most realistic racing game I've ever played, I can't remember the last time I spent more time with ANY racer than *F-Zero X*. With a game this fast, who needs great graphics? By all means buy it!

One thing that became quite clear after I tallied my Top Ten is that I'm more of a commercial gamer. Nearly every one of the games on my list is either a best-seller, or is poised to become one before the year's end. Despite what others may say, I will never admit to being influenced by advertising, marketing hype and any other such nonsense. I keep my game-playing philosophy pretty simple: good game = play; bad game = no play ...and if the rest of the gaming world happens to agree, the only thing I can say is "Good for them! They've got good taste!"

Will '99 be able to top '98...? Who knows, but there's more than enough here to tide you over until then, so get crackin' on those holiday lists. I've got two words to say for all the good little boys and girls out there:

Work Santa

Happy Holidays,

Super Teeter

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Zelda: TOOT - N64
2. StarCraft - PC
3. Metal Gear Solid - PS
4. Street Fighter Alpha 3 - Arcade
5. F-Zero X - N64
6. Resident Evil 2 - PS
7. Banjo Kazooie - N64
8. Pocket Fighter - SS
9. Gran Turismo - PS
10. Tekken 3 - PS

Top 10 Music

1. Metal Gear Solid
2. Castlevania: SOTN (Saturn)
3. Skullmonkeys
4. Final Fantasy Tactics
5. G Darius
6. Tekken
7. Elemental Gearbolt
8. Wild 9
9. Tenchu
10. F-Zero X

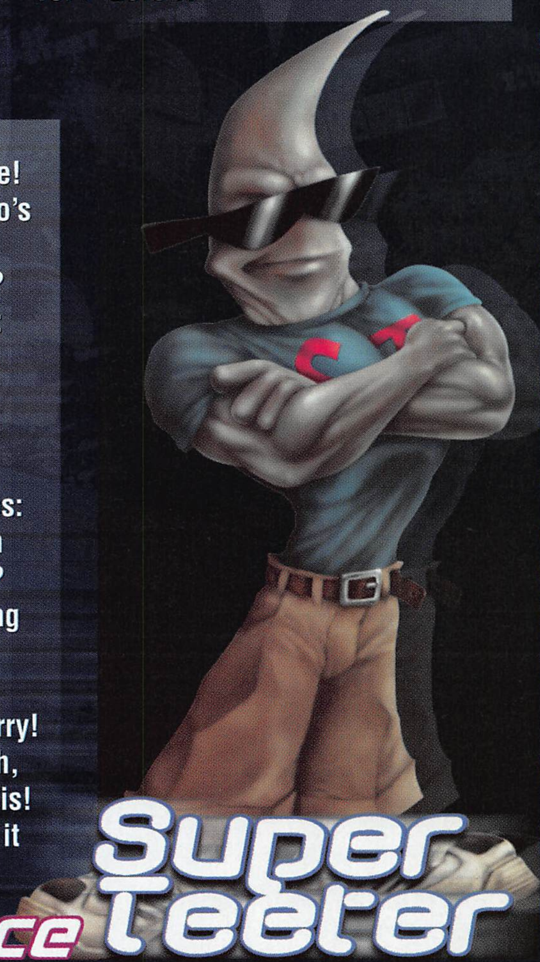
Super Teeter's Rant

Hardcore

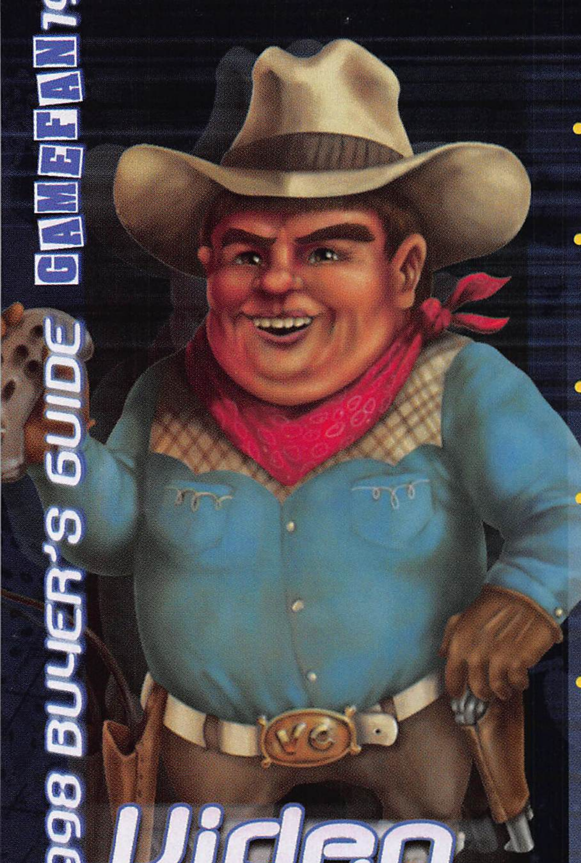
- Death of GameTek: My least favorite company of all time goes down in flames!
- Castlevania Soundtracks
- George Romero/*Resident Evil* Movie: Ok, how's that for irony? Movie karma!
- *Duke Nukem* Action Figures
- Color GameBoy: After all these years, color!
- NeoGeo Pocket: the coolest portable system of all time!
- SNK/Sega Deal: I can finally play arcade perfect games for less than 300 bucks!
- Dreamcast Announcement: let's hope Sega pulls themselves out of their hole.
- Getting GAMEFAN job: Dreams do come true!
- *Legend of Zelda* (finally)

Weaksauce

- *Deadly Arts*: The worst fighting game of ALL time!
- Internet Chat Rooms: Who's got too much time to spend with 'real people'?
- *Donkey Kong* CGI Cartoon: uh, who the heck let this turd through?
- ZDTV Networks = Silly Journalism
- *Resident Evil* Novelizations: who needs a movie when you've got tripe like this?
- *Mission: Impossible* selling 1 million copies: Those who were expecting the next big Goldeneye... sorry!
- Broken Arcade Games: Oh, come on, we ALL hate this!
- Death of Saturn: Think of it more like a sacrifice.



Super Teeter



Video Cowboy

Hardcore

- The Cowboy ropes himself a job at GameFan, my little buckaroos —Yeeehaaww!!!
- Zelda rides into town on a silver charger, trampling everything in its path, my little buckaroos!
- Watching the 'Evil Empire' suffer severe inner turmoil, my little buckaroos.
- Playing Zelda for 3 days without sleep, and then discovering that I've barely nicked the surface, my little buckaroos.
- Hanging out with the Video Buzzard on my latest excursion to Tokyo, my little buckaroos.

Weaksauce

- Discovering that Waka is dumber than a bag of hammers, my little buckaroos.
- Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver gets cold shoulder till next year, my little buckaroos.
- Watching Super Teeter 'play' the demo mode in Formula One Championship... no really, he was 'playing' the non-interactive demo mode, my little buckaroos.
- ECM telling me to cut back on the number of words in my articles or he'll "gut me with a spoon", my little buckaroos.
- Being told not to say "my little buckaroos" anymore...<sob>.

Top 10 U.S.A.

1. Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time - N64
2. South Park - N64
3. Turok II: Seeds of Evil - N64
4. Rogue Squadron - N64
5. NHL Hockey '99 - PS
6. Rogue Trip - PS
7. NFL Blitz - N64/PS
8. F-Zero X - N64
9. Metal Gear Solid - PS
10. NASCAR '99 - N64

Top 10 Sports

1. Madden NFL '99 - PS
2. WWF Warzone - N64
3. NFL Blitz - N64
4. GameDay '99 - PS
5. NBA Live '99 - PS
6. NHL '99 - PS
7. International Superstar Soccer '98 - N64
8. All Star Baseball '99 - N64
9. NASCAR '99 - N64
10. WCW VS NWO - N64

Video Cowboy's Rant

BEST YEAR OF GAMING EVER

It's been a wacky year in the wild world of video games, my fellow buckaroos. I have been in the business of playing and reviewing games for over a decade. I know I am dating myself, but I started in the early days of the Intellivision and Atari 2600. I have been around for the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System, the 8-bit Sega, the Vectrex, Sega Genesis, all three versions of the Sega CD, Super Nintendo, NEO GEO, 3DO and now the PlayStation and Nintendo 64.

Now, on the cusp of the new millennium, we are waiting for Sega's last kick at the cash cow can of gaming, the Dreamcast, to surface. I am reserving judgement until the system is released.

I've witnessed one common theme throughout the console generations — the systems with the best games have been successful.

This year has been the best year for quality software in the history of my videogaming career. *Zelda 64*, what can I say? Another Miyamoto masterpiece that pushes the envelope both in terms of gameplay and graphics. In the year 3000 A.D., I predict gamers will be playing *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, just as checkers and chess transcended the boundaries of time from the 18th to the 19th centuries.

Turok 2 and *South Park* are awesome games that utilize Nintendo's new 4-meg Expansion Pak, a device I like to refer to as the 3Dfx for the Nintendo 64. This puppy boosts the quality of the graphics in a game to high res. Not all games utilize the feature, but they will.

The *South Park* game will not be sold in Walmart due to its offensive language. But the MooMoo 2000 is one weapon that kicks ass. The game utilizes the *Turok* gaming engine as well.

On the sports side of things, EA Sports reclaimed their football crown on the PlayStation and Acclaim held theirs with *Quarterback Club 99* on the Nintendo 64.

EA Sports once again took the hockey crown with *NHL Hockey 99* on the PlayStation and set new levels of excitement with NASCAR fans on the Nintendo 64.

The quality of software on the PlayStation tailed off a little as developers and publishers shifted some of their resources and focus from the PlayStation to the Nintendo 64 and Dreamcast.

Next year will be another awesome year for gamers. Prices are coming down and we here at *GameFan* are gearing up to give you the unbiased truth about the games you buy.

Jace Fury's Rant

In my humble opinion 1998 was, for the most part, one of the slowest years in video games I can remember for quite some time. Perhaps I was distracted by the constant onslaught of freakish Dreamcast shots on the net. I mean how can I possibly be expected to play games in peace when images of 128-bit madness race throughout my head at all times? Dammit, I want my Dreamcast now! O.K. so patience is not one of my better virtues, but come on what else was there to be truly excited about in '98? Yes, I do realize this is the year both *Zelda* and *Metal Gear* would finally see the light of day, but other than these two games (which I'm happy to say were both incredible), I found the remaining 11 or so months to be filled with dozens of mediocre titles hyped relentlessly beyond the safety point of decent gaming. Now I'll refrain from mentioning any particular names for fear of immediate assassination *ahem* *Jersey Devil*, oh sorry just clearing my throat, but there was seriously a lack of quality games this year.

'98 marks the year I bid a heartfelt good-bye to my once glorious Saturn... only to later kick myself as a small handful of quality titles did manage to surface through the rubble. These included Treasure's magnificent shooter *Radiant Silvergun* and Capcom's *Vampire Savior*, complete with 4-meg RAM cart glory. Hopefully, Sega will manage a few more last-ditch attempts on the Saturn before the big drop-kick to game console graveyard.

Suprisingly, there seemed to be a small return to 2D gaming on the PlayStation this year with such fabulous titles as *Heart of Darkness* and my personal favorite *Skullmonkeys* which boasted some of the most hilarious cinemas I've ever seen in a game (the guys at Neverhood must be totally out of their minds). It's nice to see programmers make an attempt at reviving one of my favorite genres, if only for a short while.

And what of the big "N" in '98? Surely our pals at Nintendo would grace us lowly gamers with more than four quality games in a year. Hmmm, *Banjo-Kazooie*, *F-Zero X*, *1080°* and *Zelda*. Now if I'm not mistaken that's four games in... let's see... 365 days! This is just not OK, Nintendo. Now I want at least double that amount next year and at least one goofy peripheral I can keep in my bathroom... got that?!

Well I figure that's about enough ranting on my part for now. This has been the year in review Fury style!

Jace Fury

Top 10 U.S.A.

1) Zelda - N64
2) F-Zero X - N64
3) Metal Gear Solid - PS
4) Street Fighter Alpha 3 - Arcade
5) Banjo Kazooie - N64
6) Skullmonkeys - PS
7) 1080° Snowboarding - N64
8) Heart of Darkness - PS
9) Apocalypse - PS
10) Gran Turismo - PS

Top 10 Japan

1) Radiant Silvergun - SS
2) Metal Slug 2 - NG
3) Vampire Savior - SS
4) Tenchu - PS
5) Super Robot Spirits (N64)
6) Marvel Superheroes vs Street Fighter - SS
7) Fatal Fury Dominated Mind - PS
8) Capcom Generations vol 2 - SS
9) Pocket Fighter (Saturn)
10) King of Fighters R1(Neo Pocket)

Hardcore

- *SFAlpha3* makes its way to local arcades.
- Dreamcast finally arrives in only two days from closing this issue!
- Jace Fury resurrected by evil voodoo magic.
- *Zelda* and *Metal Gear* live up to all expectations.
- PlayStation proves its 2D might.
- The Neverhood brings comic relief back to games.
- The dual shock shakes the peripheral world up a bit.
- *GameFan* moves into killer new office space.
- Waka remembers Jace Fury and starts reminiscing about the old GF days.

Weaksauce

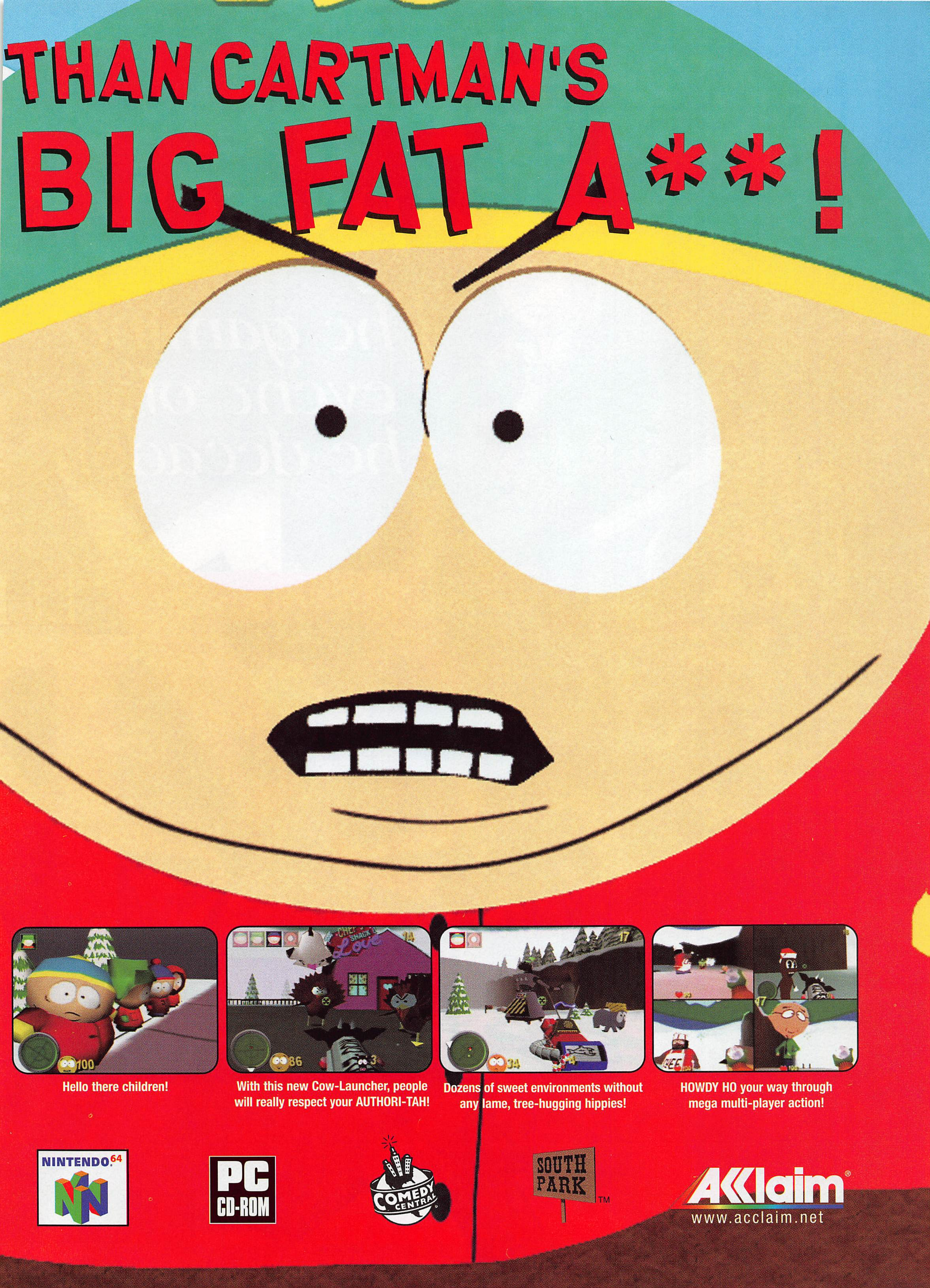
- Selected Dreamcast launch titles pushed back to December.
- Jace Fury resurrected by evil voodoo magic
- Lame video game commercials run rampant on T.V.
- *House of the Dead* blows on the Saturn.
- The Saturn continues to fade helplessly from sight.
- *Samurai 64* fails to match the hype.
- *Tomba* needs to go away forever.
- Still no sign of Nintendo's famed Bulky Drive.
- Although Waka remembers Jace Fury, he still hates his guts.

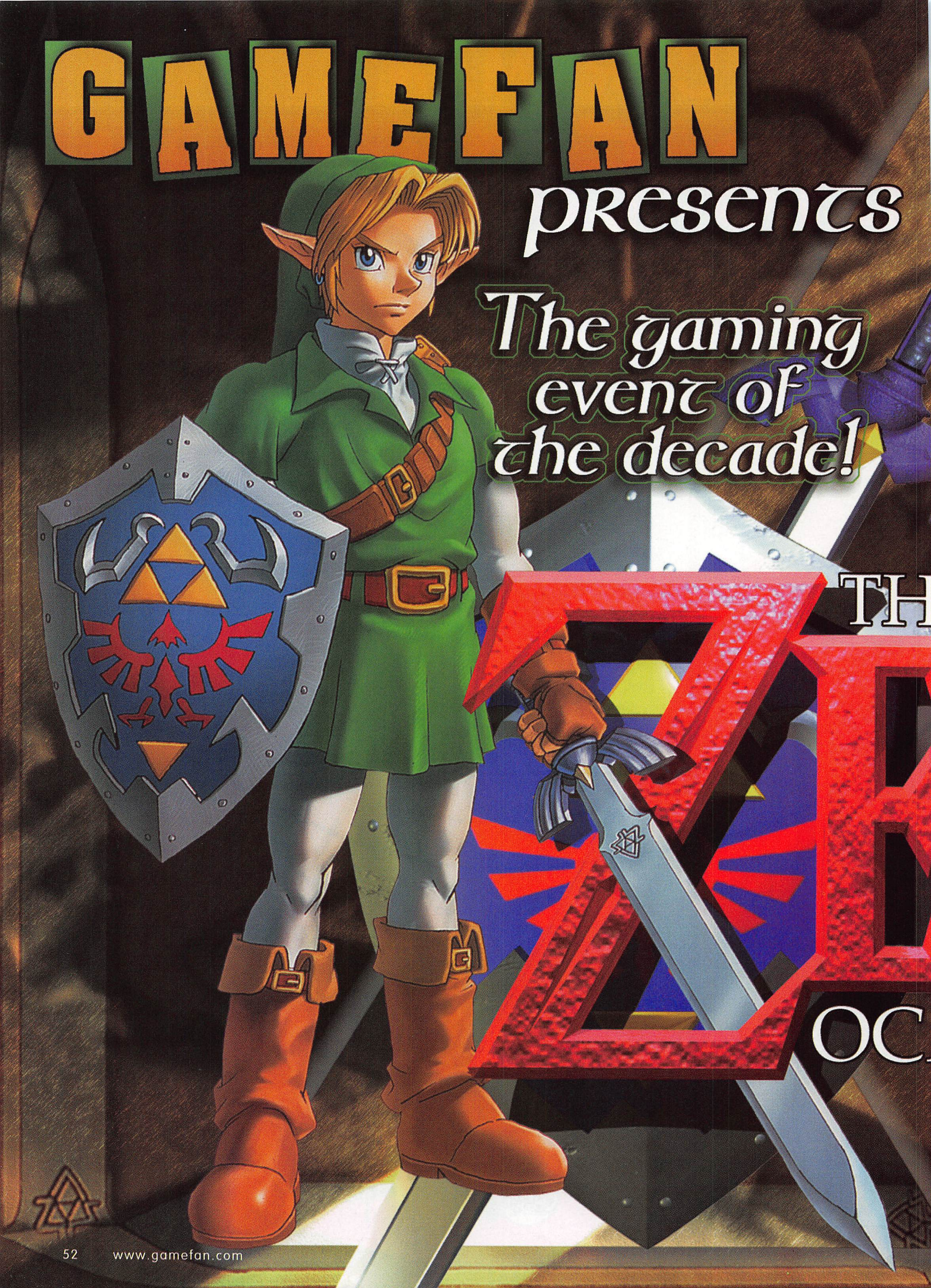
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Jace Fury



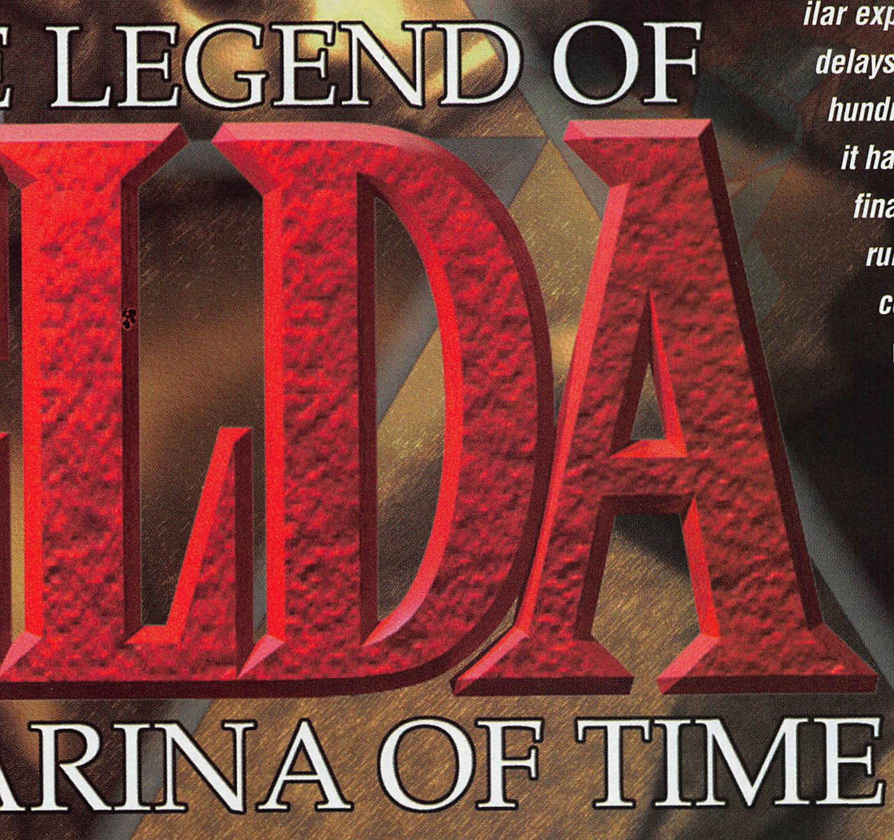
THE ONLY GAME BIGGER
OH MY GOD! SOUTH PARK IS UNDER ATTACK! THERE'S A GIANT COMET HEADING TOWARD THE TOWN AND IT'S UP TO YOU TO SAVE THEM! (YEAH, THIS GAME'S GONNA HAVE SOME PRETTY #%&!*% -UP %#$*.) WE GOT ANAL-PROBING ALIENS, BIG EVIL CLONES, DEMENTED TURKEYS, AND OF COURSE, TERRANCE AND PHILLIP. IT'S THE ONLY GAME BIGGER THAN CARTMAN'S BIG FAT A**.
SOUTH PARK
TM
RATING PENDING
RP
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
This game is for mature audiences.
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THAN CARTMAN'S
BIG FAT A**!
Hello there children!
With this new Cow-Launcher, people will really respect your AUTHORI-TAH!
Dozens of sweet environments without any lame, tree-hugging hippies!
HOWDY HO your way through mega multi-player action!
NINTENDO 64
PC CD-ROM
COMEDY CENTRAL
SOUTH PARK ™
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GAMEFAN
presents
The gaming event of the decade!
TH
OC

In the beginning...

Any game fan in the world should be run through, quite violently, if the name "Zelda" doesn't elicit a flurry of adjectives describing just how utterly fantastic this series is, but one sticks out in everyone's mind: magical. If any game was the epitome of the word 'magical,' Zelda would be the lone standard bearer. The first Zelda is still hailed by many as "the best video game ever" and this latest chapter in perhaps the greatest video game novel ever written has been feverishly anticipated (destined, perhaps?) to deliver a similar experience. And after countless delays, an ill-fated 64DD debut, and hundreds of rumors, Zelda: TOOT, as it has finally been christened, will finally step out of the shadows of rumor and hearsay and into the cold, harsh glare of scrutiny. So with great anticipation, and not a little trepidation, starts Dangohead's and Super Teeter's trek into the 256 Meg wilds of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time...





It seems the Deku Tree is terribly concerned. A tragedy of epic proportions is about to befall the land of Hyrule, and unless drastic measures are taken, all is lost. In an effort to combat this menace, the Deku Tree sends the fairy Navi into the Kokiri village to find the Chosen One. Although young, Link is ready and willing to confront the evil Ganondorf. Now, the fate of Princess Zelda, the Fairy Kingdom and all of Hyrule rests in your hands.



The Adventure is about to begin...

History of Zelda

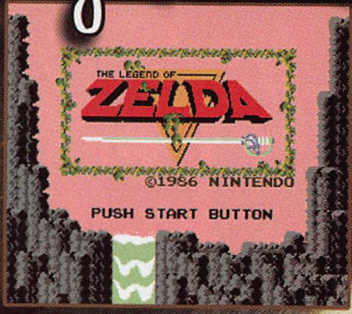
First released in 1986, the Zelda series has grown into one of the most successful gaming franchises of all time. Already making a name for itself with such classics as the Donkey Kong and Super Mario Brothers franchises, this was Nintendo's first attempt at a completely new style of gaming. Instead of accumulating points, finishing a level or anything even remotely considered to be integral to a video game of the time, a more story-oriented plot was set and the focus was set more on exploration and discovery than anything else.

The first four installments, including the NES original Legend of Zelda, it's NES sequel Zelda: Adventure of Link, the SNES Link to the Past and GAMEBOY version Link's Awakening (as well as two relatively unknown, forgettable CD-I versions not handled by Nintendo) have, combined, sold well over 15+ million copies. The series has since then spawned merchandising (think t-shirts, dolls, toys, etc.) as well as an animated series, role playing games, and even a breakfast cereal.

For most gamers who remember, the long history of the Legend of Zelda series began with the first television commercials. Featuring a confused chap frantically racing through gray corridors, desperately searching and yelling out "Zelda!". Did he ever find her? Who knows, but the gaming public sure did, big time. At it's release, the first Legend of Zelda was listed by many popular entertainment guides as "the greatest videogame of all time". Sporting one truly cool gold colored cartridge (and a box with a hole to show it off) this first game in the series completely redefined the action/adventure genre in more ways than one. Sporting the rarely seen birds-eye perspective, LoZ was able to incorporate new gameplay elements and unique puzzle-solving elements. But more than anything else, the game told a story of a boy, a girl, and a kingdom in peril. This was the stuff legends are made of, so to speak, and a new series was born...

The Legend of Zelda - NES

1986



The game that started it all, and helped to redefine the very essence of gaming. A new gameplay experience helped The Legend of Zelda to become the first Nintendo game to sell over a million copies in the US. A hidden 'second quest', a fairy tale story and a cast of memorable characters helped ensure the first Zelda game a place amongst the greatest gaming adventures of all time. With this first gold plated adventure, a legend was born...

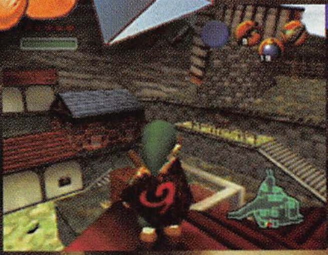


Gameplay

Intact, or a dust-encrusted relic?

The greatest fear that many have about dragging the venerable *Zelda* series into the 3D world is whether or not its gameplay would remain intact after shrugging off its sprite-based heritage and stepping into the world of polygons and texture-maps. In its purest form, almost all of the love and joy derived from the *Zelda* series is a result of its stellar, Miyamoto-blessed gameplay; a quality almost no other game has been able to successfully emulate. Thankfully, it's all here — right down to pushing the gravestones. But those that were worried about Zelda turning into another "me-too!" platforming treasure hunt should do themselves a favor by not losing any sleep over it.

For starters, there's no jump button. If there's a fence that you'd like to hop over, simply run











up to it, and Link will do the rest (and with some fancy analog maneuvers, Link will actually tippy-toe ON the fence!). Platform-esque jumping is done in the same manner: simply walk to the edge of a platform that you'd like to leap from, and Link will auto-jump.

OK, now that we've established that the classic 2D elements made the trip as well as one addition, what's new? Not soon after starting the game, you'll be on your way into the first dungeon. Here it's a virtual smorgasborg of new play mechanics, gameplay features, and above all else... a good indication of what the rest of the game has in store.

After defeating the first crop of enemies, Link will obtain his first item, the Deku stick. While it can be assigned as an attack weapon, its true purpose is much more clever. In the first dungeon, you might find yourself in a room where escape seems impossible. Take a look around and you'll see lamps burning, but one seems to be burned out. When all seems lost, why not try lighting the stick with fire, then re-igniting the burned out lamp? Will it work? You'll just have to see for yourself...

Further into the quest Link becomes an adult, and with age comes new gameplay elements. A classic Zelda weapon, the grappling hook, makes its return in style. As anyone with an overactive imagination could guess, a grappling hook in a 3D world leads to dozens of possibilities and thankfully, those dreams don't go to waste here. When Link switches to grappling hook mode (just as in slingshot mode) his view switches to a first-person perspective, enabling him to make just the shot he wants. Basically, *Zelda: OOT* delivers what Zelda titles have always provided — stunning gameplay.

Zelda II: The Adventure of Link - NES

1988



After the phenomenal success of his first adventire in the land of Hyrule, could Nintendo possibly follow up with a sequel that could out-do the first? Unfortunately, even with stellar sales and great graphics, most took an immediant dislike to the new platforming perspective. Being very un-Zelda like, Link's Adventure was the recipent of being the most unpopular game in the series to date (those heinously bad CD-I titles don't count). Still, it was a fun time...



Graphics

A finely knit tapestry, or the rank contents of a rusty bed pan?



The best way to approach the graphics in the latest addition to the Zelda clan is to evaluate what we were hoping for and what we wound up getting. Part of the charm of the first, third and fourth *Legend of Zelda* games was partially due to their perspective. Unlike any game before it, the original Zelda game had a unique bird's-eye view, which enabled the designers and programmers to implement some truly unique ideas and encounters. Full screen puzzles, roaming bosses, and of course, the adventure aspect itself. Basically, it was 3D without the 3D. Where fans scoffed at Link's second adventure, they embraced his third and fourth. Fact is, fans know what they want and they're very appreciative whenever anyone listens.

While not as polished or as colorful as *Banjo Kazooie*, or as delightful as Mario's mushroomy backgrounds, what Miyamoto and crew have done with this Zelda title is create a virtual 3D world, completely unlike any seen before on this or any other system. The first level, in which Link is joined by the fairy Navi, is outstanding. Step outside his treehouse (literally) and be prepared to witness the closest video adaptation of a storybook fairy tale ever seen — it's as if Miyamoto took all the best elements of countless fantasy movies and wove them into a stunning 3D tapestry. Little mushrooms are everywhere, phosphorescent, multi-jointed wisps float gracefully through the air, and what almost appears to be pollen is everywhere.

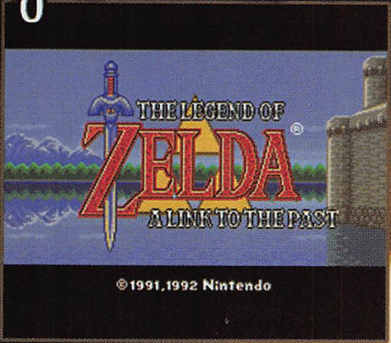
What's most amazing of all is the fact that these are all simple, easy graphical effects. Where most designers concentrate on creating brilliant, flashy ovations to your senses (assaults, even), the Zelda team has decided to concentrate on the little things. Alone, none of these effects are particularly impressive, but together they work to create an uncanny feeling of depth and completeness. You'll find yourself running everywhere just to see what little surprises you might find, always discovering something tucked away. "What's behind that tree?" "What's in that well?" and "What would happen if I took a whack at that chicken?", will distract you from the main quest, but add astronomically to the sense of life and magic that this title exudes unlike any other.

Stunning, real-time cinemas in Zelda: OOT not only visually rival the best seen on ANY CD-ROM format, but surpass them in both style and presentation. One of the earliest cinemas has both Link and Zelda discussing the suspect actions of Ganondorf, then sneaking a peek at him through a castle window. At just the right moment, Ganon's eye turns toward them. Has he seen them? The opening sequence, which shows Link riding his steed Epona through several Hyrule landscapes, borders on full-motion video. Simply amazing. But more than anything else, the power of ingenuity over technology is presented. Whatever the graphics lack in sizzle is made up for in aching amounts of substance, plain and simple.

To get a good idea of the scope and size of the bosses in *Zelda: OOT*, let's talk about the first one you encounter. After clearing the first dungeon, our hero Link comes face to face with Gohma, the spider-esque boss intent on destroying any hope you have of escaping. The entire battle takes place in a dimly lit, gray-colored cavern with wicked-looking stalactites hanging from the ceiling. At first, only the sound of rustling is heard, but as Link's gaze is drawn upwards, he encounters Gohma firsthand. Initially she simply slinks along the ceiling, but then leaps to the dungeon floor to join the battle in full. She's just a small example of the enemies that are characteristic of the latest Zelda, with some bosses being several screens large... immense is not the word.

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past – SNES

1992



After a somewhat shakey second outing, Zelda returned to its roots. Thanks to the incredible powers of the SNES, this adventure looked and sounded better than any before and eventually went on to become one of the most successful titles in Nintendo's history. Not a true sequel, but a prequel to the first adventure, A Link to the Past saw Link travel between Hyrule's light and dark worlds to once again confront the evil powers of Ganon and his army of the dark...





Control

Tight as a drum, or loose as Bubba's teeth?





Just like the revolutionary revisions that were made with Mario's upgrade from SNES to N64, *Zelda* introduces new control features that will not only help players navigate through this wondrous 3D world, but will likely create new standards in gaming — 3D or otherwise. When *Mario 64* was introduced to the gaming public, video game players everywhere marveled at the ease of control, dynamics of analog movement, fantastic camera angles, and intuitive 3D 'feel' which enabled *Mario* fans of every skill level to not only enjoy the game but gradually become ace treasure hunters. *Zelda: OOT* follows *Mario 64's* footsteps in creating a masterful control scheme that enhances both suspension of disbelief and completely immerses you in the game.

When *Zelda II: Adventure of Link* followed on the heels of the incredibly popular original, many Zelda-ites claimed that it was "un-Zelda-like" mainly due to the new side-scrolling presentation. Most of the exploration and battle sequences took place in this broken format, which turned off many Zelda fans (including the entire *GameFan* staff). Perhaps, though, adding the jump feature and actual battle moves (jumping attacks,







crouching attacks, etc) made it too complicated for the Zelda fan that appreciated the Zen-like simplicity of combat that the original elicited. Power belonging to the public, this is probably why the third game, *Zelda: A Link to the Past*, went back to its overhead, non-jumping roots. 2D gameplay in a 3D world.

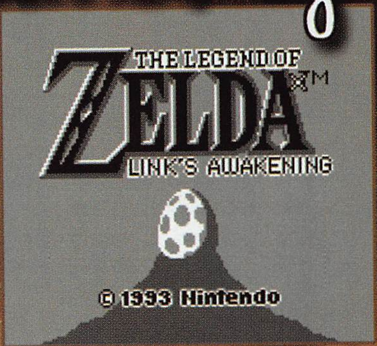
Control is blissfully analog, and incredibly precise. Driving the stick forward will make Link trot at a quick pace. Inventory control is very slick, since each of the C buttons (except the Up C button) can be set to use items. Combat is fairly simple as moving the analog stick vertically will produce vertical slashes, and moving it horizontally will produce horizontal slashes. However, when dealing with multiple enemies in a 3D environment, there are two ways to eliminate foes with the keen edge of your sword: A) you can run around like a headless chicken slashing anything within reach of your maniacal swipe (ECM style) or B) use the Z-button to target a specific enemy, and launch more strategic strikes. This innovative feature changes the screen to a 'widescreen' presentation (presumably to add a dramatic feel) and while locked-on an enemy, Link can still move while facing the targeted enemy. When in this targeting mode Link can shimmy around in all directions. Look for many a game company to 'pay homage' to this feature in their upcoming titles.

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening - GB

1993



To many fans, this portable adventure starring the ever heroic Link is considered to be not only the best GameBoy game, but also the best of the Zelda series. Featuring ALL of the gameplay from the incredibly popular SNES adventure, Link's Awakening proved once again that a great adventure is never dictated by technology. Not surprisingly, a colorized version will be among the first titles in Nintendo's upcoming Color GameBoy's library.



Sound and Music

Soaring symphony or crass cacophony?



To say any of the *Zelda*s have the best gaming music might be a bit of a stretch, but to say that the older titles were without their charms would be insane. The tunes in *Zelda* were definitely hum-happy, much like the *Mario* series (most of us can still hum the whole Mario anthem... ALL TOGETHER NOW!).

And while the music quality on the N64 isn't exactly CD-quality, the score in *Zelda: OOT* is well orchestrated with bouncy melodies while Link is in his home village; phantom-of-the-opera-like harmonies when encountering bosses; and some "back-in-the-saddle-again" trail music when traveling between towns. Even the original Zelda-overworld ditty is here, albeit slightly remixed. Nostalgia is a good thing!

While the music in *Zelda: OOT* isn't the best example of the N64's aural prowess, what's here is still good stuff. Amazingly, the music fits each sequence in the game perfectly and makes the game truly enjoyable. Listening to the music on its own, most people might shrug it off. However, if you play *Zelda: OOT* from start to end, and then listen to the *Zelda: OOT* tunes again, images of dungeons, expansive fields, large monsters, delightful people come to mind.

Sound effects, for the most part, are delightful, though some of them may get annoying enough for perturbed gamers to take a fireman's axe to the TV. But for those that remember the first time they opened a chest in the original *Zelda*, Nintendo obviously loves you very much because they've put back the original discovery sounds. In fact, most of the sound effects in the game are the updated original sound effects of the older *Zelda* games. While critics may whine about the lack of evolution, I prefer these sound effects of old, as it creates the true *Zelda* ambiance. Adding to these golden oldies of sound effects are the battle cries, yelps of pain, and huffs n' puffs that Link exhibits when playing the game. The fact that both young Link and older Link sound differently is both a nice touch and a sound assurance of quality that comes when a *Zelda* game is made.



And in Closing...

While *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* is not a perfect game, it does everything it set out to accomplish, and then some. Simply put, this is the gaming event of the decade.

The magic and unknown wonder of Zelda is faithfully and respectfully passed to the new gaming generation. So I wouldn't think of holding them to my own personal standards. Just as a parent feels that warm, fuzzy feeling while they watch their child for the first time discover Santa Claus, I watch as the new generation discovers what made me happy as a child. To them, I pass the torch. Let it burn brightly...

When the day comes that the idea of being entertained by electronic games becomes stale, when the world finally loses interest, and the time comes to judge the overall effect of such a hobby, there are certain points in the history of gaming that will undoubtedly burn in the conscience of the gaming populace. Without hesitation, the *Legend of Zelda* series will be one of those memories.

When I look back at those years, I can safely say with a smile that I'm glad I spent as much time as I did with Nintendo and their adventures... gaming that reflects the positive, substance-over-style and, most importantly, the very best intentions of one of the world's greatest and most popular gaming companies. This company doesn't just present quality, they create and define it. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* is more than just the gaming event of the year, more than a wake-up call to all mediocre game developers. It's a virtual testament to what gaming at its very core should be. All developers are given the same tools, how they choose to use them is their choice. Thankfully, with artisans like Nintendo out there, we can all feel a lot more comfortable in knowing that the future of gaming is in the right hands. ***ECM***

Miyamoto Magic!

An Interview with Shigeru Miyamoto

Miyamoto-san was kind enough to take some time from his busy schedule to sit down with GF (via the Video Cowboy) and share his thoughts on Zelda 64. Take it away VC.

GF: How did you (or who did) come up with the concept for The Legend of Zelda series?

SM: As with the *Super Mario* series, I came up with the concept for the *Zelda* series from my adventures as a child exploring the wide variety of places around my home.

GF: What does Zelda mean or where did the name come from?

SM: There was a famous American novelist, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, and the name Zelda was the name of his wife who was said to have been a famous and beautiful woman. Because I liked the sound of her name, I took the liberty of using her name on our very first Zelda title.

GF: What is the significance of the Ocarina and how did it come about that that instrument was added to the game's overall design?

SM: While we were making this *Zelda* game, we sometimes transplanted items that had been featured in the preceding *Zelda* games. This game is a heart-warming adventure drama, and the joy of playing this instrument yourself and the innocent sound of the instrument matched the concept very well. That is why we decided to use the instrument's name in the game's subtitle.

GF: In designing the game, how did you and your team stay focused for three-plus years on one project?

SM: It was the challenge of making something unprecedented. Now that we have finished the game, we are beginning to realize how long we spent in development — three years. We're working in the interactive game world, and we have to always work on something that nobody has ever tried before. In other words, it is difficult to predict how long it will take to complete. Well, of course, I have to admit that I myself am not very quick in doing my share of the work, and that has caused the long time to complete the project, to some extent.

GF: How do you keep yourself and your team motivated over the course of the development of a game like The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time that takes years to make?

SM: I think that for any game designer, working on a title in the *Zelda* series is great motivation alone. As we learned more about the hardware, we became more excited about what the final product was going to be like.

GF: Please break down for us how you arrived at the design for The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Did you come up with the various areas of the game yourself? What influenced some of the different parts of the game? Real life? Other games?

SM: Initially, we set out to tell the history of Link, Zelda and the land of Hyrule in full 3-D, and it evolved from there. As you will see when you play the game, the Hyrule world map still includes many of the familiar places as the previous games, but with the addition of new places, such as Lon Lon Ranch. There have been many influences on the design of the game from a variety of people. This was very much a team effort, with the best ideas being accepted and integrated into the game.

GF: How do you measure whether or not one of your games is successful? By the number it sells or how it is perceived by your peers or the gaming public?

SM: Perception from our peers and from the industry is important, but the true measure of a game's success is how long people continue to play a game after its release. The most successful games are fun and challenging and have great replay value. If we focus on thoroughly utilizing a system's capabilities to make the best game possible and give players a new experience, we believe that the game will be successful.

GF: Does the poor performance of the Nintendo 64 system in Japan have any bearing on how you designed The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and did you or your teams feel any pressure because of this?

SM: Since the initial stages of the game's development, we set out to make the best game possible. The pressure on our team was to make the fifth *Zelda* adventure live up to the precedent set by the others.

GF: How well do you think the game will be received in Japan?

SM: We believe that the game will be well received in all markets where there are video game players.

GF: While making the game, did this influence the way that you designed the game?

SM: No.

GF: Is the Japanese version that much different than the U.S. version?

SM: As you would expect, the only difference in the game will be the text language. We want everyone to have the same great *Zelda* experience.

GF: How good of a game is The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time? What's next for the series?

SM: (Laughs) That's for you to decide. We have additional plans for the series, but it is too soon to comment at this time.

GF: Do you feel this is your greatest accomplishment?

SM: This is definitely one of them.

GF: What game do you enjoy playing the most?

SM: I enjoy playing the battle modes of *Mario Kart 64* and *StarFox 64* with my children.



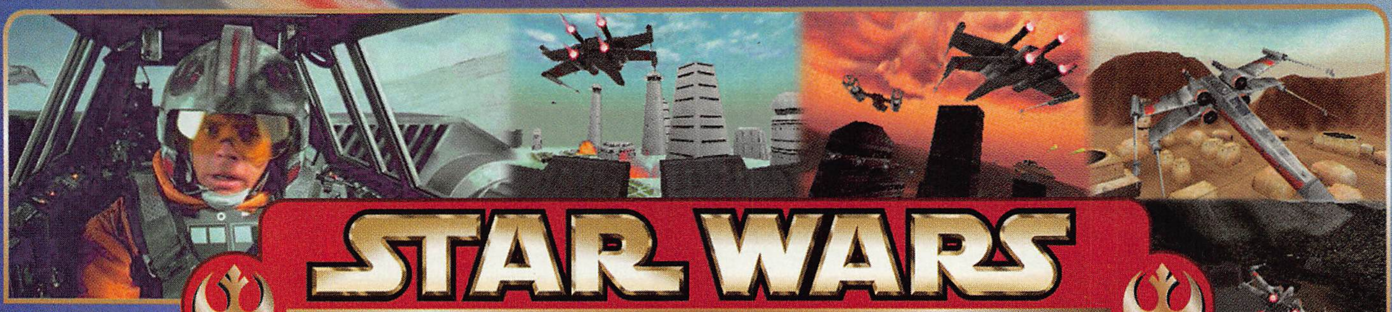
GF: You have been successful at making games all of your career. How much longer do you plan to continue?

SM: I will make video games as long as I am allowed to.

GF: Mario fans in the U.S. have been asking whether the sequel to Super Mario 64 will see the return of Luigi?

SM: In the current preliminary program, Mario and Luigi are running around, though it has not been decided if he will eventually be in the final product.

GameFan would like to thank Shigeru Miyamoto for taking the time to have this interview with us. And Video Cowboy for not saying "my little buckaroos" during this interview.



STAR WARS
ROGUE SQUADRON





R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEV- LUCAS ARTS/ FACTOR 5
PUB- NINTENDO
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW



VIDEO COWBOY
In the words of the great Bill Murray, "Star Wars... nothing but Star Wars..."

"Stay on target, stay on target..." — infamous words which *Star Wars* fans will remember for as long as they live. Now gamers can get behind the controls of an X-wing and relive that experience on the Nintendo 64 with *Rogue Squadron*.

GameFan recently went down to the LucasArts Ranch to rustle up some information and play the game. And although we didn't get to see the ranch, at least we got to play the game.

Rogue Squadron was developed by Factor 5 and LucasArts. Nintendo will be publishing it, along with another game about *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, the upcoming *Star Wars* prequel.

Die-hard *Star Wars* fans know that after the destruction of the first Death Star, Rogue Squadron was formed from a group of young yet experienced Rebel pilots.

As Luke, you'll fly 16 different missions using five types of Rebel fighters including the X-Wing, A-Wing, V-Wing, Speeder, and Y-Wing. Familiar members of the Rogue Squadron join you as well including Wedge Antilles, Zev Senesca, Wes Janson, and Dack Ralter. LucasArts has even included a small biography for every pilot.

Rogue Squadron takes place between *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Your mission is to defend the fragile Rebel Alliance from a very angry Imperial force, upset about the destruction of the Death Star. You begin the game on Luke's home planet Tatooine, then move onto the worlds Barkhesh, Corellia, the Jade Moon, and Taloraan. All the missions take place close to the planets' surfaces, except for the incredible cloud battle at Taloraan.

Just like in *Shadows of the Empire*'s Hoth battle, there are large environments to fly over; but *Rogue Squadron*'s landscapes are 5 times larger than *Shadow*'s. Truth be told, the inspiration for *Rogue Squadron* came








from that very level of *Shadows of the Empire*; when LucasArts heard the frothing cries of *Star Wars* fans wanting an entire game based on the first level, along came *Rogue Squadron*.

Unfortunately, the game doesn't have multi-player capabilities. According to LucasArts, this was a decision made because of time constraints. That's too bad... dreams of blasting your friends out of the skies will have to wait...

Even though there's no multi-player madness, *Rogue Squadron's* prolific storyline, incredible sound effects, and out of this world graphics will go a long way towards satisfying *Star Wars* fans, including this one.

The ships, levels, and worlds of this game look incredible. *Rogue Squadron* utilizes what I call the 3Dfx for the Nintendo 64 — the 4-meg Expansion pak. It plugs into a small compartment at the front of the N64 and, to borrow a phrase from Cartman, makes the game "KICKASS" graphically [Eggo's note: Hail to the King!] by souping up the visuals to high resolution.

When you fly into an enemy installation, you'll also see the incredible amount of detail that has been put into this game. The real-time lighting effects from the missiles, blasters and other weapons add to the excitement and realism of the battles.

The only problem with the graphics is the draw-in, which is most evident early in the game when you have to fly through a canyon and destroy radar installations. One second, the radar installation isn't there, then it suddenly appears, giving you little if any time to maneuver.

Also, I don't remember there being that much fog on Hoth. Maybe I am being too harsh, but these are problems you'll notice when you play the game.

On the upside, the 45 minutes of speech and the riveting soundtrack will send familiar tingles down the spines of *Star Wars* junkies. The sound is, if not the best, close to the best I have ever heard in a Nintendo 64 game. Voice narratives explain each ship, introduce Rogue members, and even set the stage for each mission.

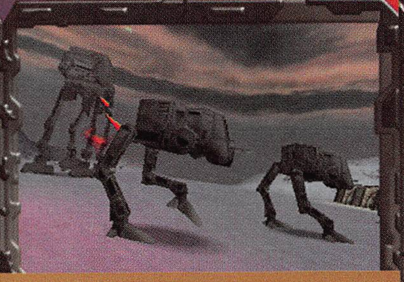
In one of the missions, you and your wingmen take on Imperial Walkers, and after launching tow cables at their legs, you can finish them off with an ear-searing explosion that makes you feel good inside. "Nice shot, Janson."

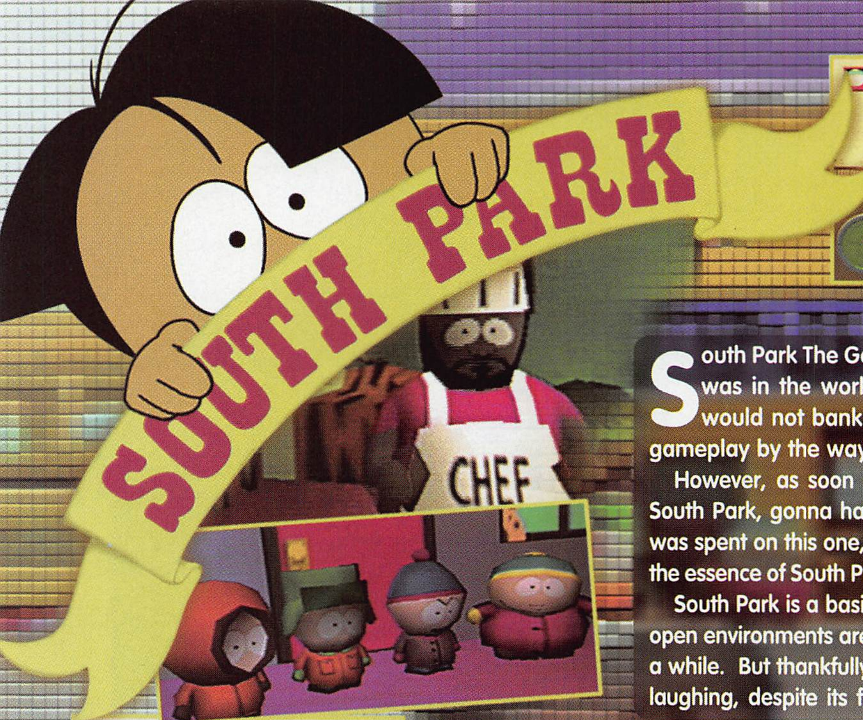
The levels become more challenging as you progress through the game, and the mission objectives, thankfully, are clear. Lastly, you're given a medal and rank based on your performance [Ed's note: Are we talking Mon Mothma and a throne room? Sign me up!].

So there you have it, my fellow Rebel pilots, a must-buy for *Star Wars* fans. The game is fairly challenging and will satisfy many a budding Rebel Alliance pilot. May the Force be with you. ***VC***











South Park The Game... cash run or quality? When I first heard this game was in the works, I was worried. My prayers went out that Acclaim would not bank on the South Park name to do all the selling, leaving gameplay by the wayside.

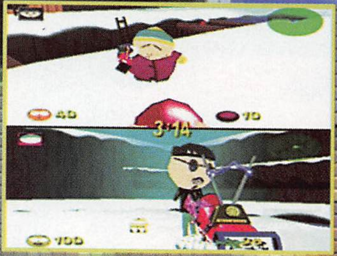
However, as soon as I saw the rendered introduction (I m goin down to South Park, gonna have myself a time...), I was shocked at the quality. Time was spent on this one, and most importantly... the programmers have captured the essence of South Park that obnoxious, politically incorrect sense of humor.

South Park is a basic, first person corridor shooter... minus the corridors. The open environments are uninspired, and the gameplay can become tedious after a while. But thankfully, the game s humor and voices are enough to keep fans laughing, despite its faults. Wacky weapons include white snowballs, yellow snowballs (use your imagination), dodge balls, sponge dart launchers, cow launchers, and Terrance & Phillip farting dolls... to name a few.









Those worried that Nintendo and Comedy Central would censor this game down to Disney standards can finally rest. There s enough content here to warrant a parental group protests from the woman in Chef s bed to Stan s bleeped profanity-filled rants, it s far from tame (you have to wonder what was cut from the game, considering how much they got away with).

Most of the South Park characters are in the game and playable in the multi-player portion (you have to unlock them by progressing through story mode): Mephisto, Ike, Ned, Mrs. Cartman, etc. Thought was also put into devising items/enemies: Snacky Cakes and Cheesy Poofs replenish energy, and you fight angry cows, evil clones, mutant turkeys and those damn aliens.





The main reason this game feels so much like South Park is because there s so many voice samples in it. Famous lines such as Kickass (there are multiple versions of this one) come straight from the show, and there s enough different ones that they don t become repetitive. In story mode, you can play as any of the four main characters: Cartman, Kyle, Stan, and Kenny, and each one has a ton of speech crammed into the cartridge.

Oh, the game also uses the RAM pack that all those dinosaur hunters are raving about... which runs the game in hi-res mode. So there you have it, the funniest FPS shooter of the year, and definitely worth a look for h-core South Park fans. Who needs dinosaurs when you ve got the omnipotent, booming voice yelling Snaky Cakes! Now if you ll excuse me, I ve got a game to play... Screw you guys, I m goin home! *E*

R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - IGUANA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - NOW



EGGO
Finally, a corridor shooter I'm at home with.



First-person shooters have always met with limited success on consoles. Not in the sense that they didn't sell well, but rather that they generally can't hold a candle to their PC brethren. Minus the absolutely incredible *Goldeneye*, I've had a generally low opinion of console FPS'. Even the first *Turok* on N64 left quite a bit to be desired with the infamous N64 fog machine working overtime to shroud the levels in a thick blanket of smog (looked a lot like LA on a good day, <cough>, <hack>). Some nicely modeled and animated characters helped players look past the rather overcast world, though.

Alas, gameplay was sorely lacking, with a frustrating blend of platform jumping and CPU-choking amounts of slowdown -







TUROK 2
SEEDS OF EVIL

it seemed like Iguana tried to shove too much data down the N64's narrow throat (kinda' like squeezing Bubba and El Nino into a size five swimsuit...<shudder>). None of that stopped it from achieving insane sales numbers, however, easily blowing past the 1 million units mark and into the happy little Nintendo Player's Choice club where it continues to sell quite nicely to this day; not bad for an also-ran comic book character.

Fast-forward a year and a half and Iguana is wrapping *Turok 2: Seeds of Evil*. The big questions are: did somebody pull the plug on that damnable fog machine (pesky thing is stuck on overdrive); how much pain is going to be caused by the platforming sections; does the new 4 meg RAM cart really make that big a difference; how's the frame rate fare this time out (oh boy); and what would be better: a two piece or one piece swimsuit for Bubba and El Nino (<double shudder>)? Don your war paint, lace up those boots, and load your trusty shotgun-welcome to...***Turok2: Seeds of Evil.***





















After Turok destroyed the vile Campaigner and the Chronoscepter at the conclusion of *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, he unwittingly freed an evil that has been with the universe since the dawn of time: the Primagen, free to once again roam the world, wreaking havoc and destruction. It is the new Turok's duty to stop this unholy menace and, amazingly, save the world. Now that I've gotten the ultra-exciting story out of the way, let's get to the meat.

Clouded House

First off, the fog machine has been switched to a lower setting. Instead of appearing to be no more than 20-30 feet in front of you, the wall of visibility has been pushed back to about double that distance. Without question, it's a noticeable improvement, though I had been feverishly praying to the gods of 3D that it would have been eradicated as it has in the glory that is *Zelda*. If nothing else, it's quite a bit more tolerable this time around.

I am Turok... Mario Hunter

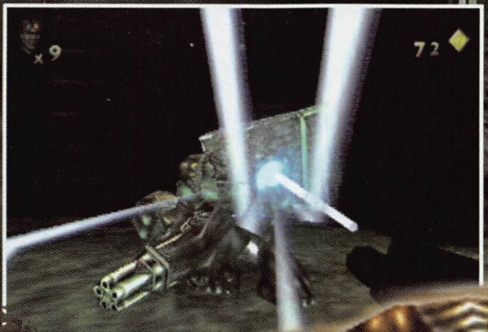
Thankfully (and I won't be able to express this enough) the platforming elements have been almost completely repaired. No longer will you be forced to navigate a bottomless pit by bounding across a dozen, small-as-Eggo platforms, always wondering if your next leap will send you back to the save point faster than your control pad slams into the TV a la Reubus (he's been clocked at 110 MPH after extended sessions of *Goldeneye @ 007* level). Nope, this time around, most of the platforms are over something that, at the very least, will break your fall instead of breaking Turok.

Is it Live or is it the Expansion Pak?

So, does the much-vaunted, relatively inexpensive RAM pak make that much of a difference? In a phrase: are you kidding?! Of course it does! Instead of being forced to play in typical, N64 super-low res, you can now take advantage of *Turok 2*'s beautiful graphics to the fullest. Doubling the actual resolution has led to a huge difference in quality and once you get a little taste, you'll find it hard to go back to the rest of your N64 games which have now been relegated to red-headed stepchild land (Shidoshi's official role at GF, BTW). The








graphical difference is almost as great as the size difference between Dangohead's noggin and the average human head. Heck, I'd even go out on a limb and say had it been built-in (as it should have been, <grumble>), Sony would be singing a much different tune through badly broken teeth...

Aural Assault

Glorious visuals aside, the sound and music are equally stunning. In fact, *T2* features the best music ever in an N64 title. The samples are absolutely astounding, with everything from the ring of gunshots, to the gurgling of an enemy as he chokes on his own blood coming through in crystal clear perfection. Those that have a solid audio setup will be in pulse-pounding ecstasy. Just make sure the neighbors know what's going on — at times this game sounds like World War III.

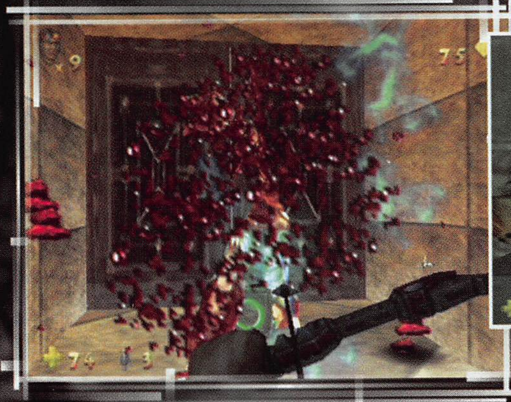
All is not Well in Dinosaur Land

The prognosis thus far has been quite good. The fog's been reduced, the platforms fixed, and the RAM pak is the greatest thing since Kid Fan learned the virtues of keeping his mouth closed during one of his weekly feeding frenzies on McDonalds 39 cent cheeseburger Sundays. All that and El Niño couldn't agree on a swim suit, so he's taken up chupacabra ranching high atop Chupacabra Mountain (I fear for the poor, murderous, blood-sucking beasties). Ah, but there's one major issue that wasn't addressed and is the main item that has always kept PC FPSs one step ahead of their console cousins: the importance of maintaining a playable frame rate, an ugly roadblock this game has faced throughout its development.




I've Been Framed!

While it can't challenge the champ of framiness (*Doom* on Saturn is still the king), at parts it makes a valiant attempt. Though the game moves at a solid 20-25 frames most of the time, it's when the screen gets crowded with two or three enemies that things get interesting. At points like this, the frame rate breaks down so intensely (hard numbers are difficult to come by in the post-Nick Rox era) that it becomes nigh impossible to accurately hit anything, though your foes don't suffer from the same malady. At one point, Super Teeter and I could actually count the individual frames, as the N64 we were running it on spewed smoke from the cart slot — I swear I heard it whimper (Teeter later buried it in the back of Posty's cave — poor fella never stood a chance). I'm willing to bet, though, that if the game was held back for another month this glaring flaw would have been rectified — nothing like the looming Christmas juggernaut to signal an abrupt end to a title's gestation... ready or not, <sigh>. So yes, it's bad, but it doesn't break the game; not quite, anyway.










Framiness aside, *Turok 2* has one thing definitely in its favor: The levels are absolutely HUGE. The sheer size of each level is mind-boggling — they even challenge the Video Cowboy's not inconsiderable girth. Each stage features multiple routes, requiring backtracking and multiple hops between different worlds in order to fully complete the game. The only negative is that you must complete all level objectives before you're free to return to the hub to choose the next level — this can become VERY frustrating when you're missing one level objective that is neatly tucked away in some remote corner. Beyond that, the levels in this game are so large, they dwarf many full-blown games on the N64 or any platform. 256 megs really does make all the difference.



Get Me Ten Thousand Pints of Type-O Negative, Stat!

For a game featured on a console by a company that once abhorred anything related to violence (*Duke Nukem 64*, anyone?), the blood flows a bit freely in *Turok 2*. If anybody out there remembers what happened to Johnny Depp in the first *Nightmare on Elm Street*, you'll have a good indication of how much blood you'll come across... in the first five minutes. Heads routinely explode; limbs are blown off; and Dango-headed holes are shot through enemy after enemy all accompanied by copious amounts of hemoglobin generously sprayed in every direction. Sure there's an option to turn the blood green (yeah, right) or off ("But Mom, Jimmy's mother lets him play with blood!"), but any red-blooded gamer will have nothing to do with that.





Object of my Affection

While most FPSs lack anything resembling exciting mission objectives, every level in *Turok* features a unique set of goals. One level, you'll be saving children locked away by the dastardly Endtrails; on the next, trapping the Blind Ones in their dark, molten caverns; or ending the Mantids' bid for supremacy by destroying their master computer. The sheer variety in missions is welcome beyond words and turns the game into a much more complete (dare I say, epic?) experience. In fact, epic may barely do justice to the size and scope of the missions contained herein.







Tourniquet, Please...

So despite some frame-rate issues (it's painful, but worth it), questionable amounts of gore (not for me, but the more sensitive types out there — like Nintendo used to be), and the eventual fisticuffs that will invariably ensue when friends begin beating each other for a turn, this is the N64 game of the year... after, well... you know. This is one game you simply cannot go wrong with — just make sure you tell everybody you know and love that you're gonna be gone for a little while... a few months should cover it. ***ECM***





Lock and Load!

While by no means a complete list, here's just a smattering of the various implements of mass destruction you'll wield on your way to defeating the Primagen (they're also handy for dealing with weak sauce editors):



War Blade:
The weapon of choice for those of you that prefer a more visceral experience. Wolverine never had it so good.

Cerebral Bore:
Ah, the magic of on-the-fly lobotomies. One of the more creative weapons, the CB homes in on an enemies brain waves and then fires a small projectile that burrows, mole-like, into your enemies brain case causing painful itching, swelling, and blood-spurting death. Beware, though! If an enemy doesn't generate enough electrical activity (Waka for example) you'll be shooting blanks.



Tek Bow:
Ah, imagine sitting in a deer stand, waiting for Bambi to bound on by and then popping him with a handy little tek arrow. Once it strikes, count to three, and <BOOM!>, no more Bambi, or in our case, evil beastie.





Firestorm Cannon:
Trademark weapon of Jesse 'The Body' Ventura in Predator, though now that he's governor of Minnesota he probably won't need it (strong emphasis on probably). Lays down a swath of red hot death, that only the hardiest of antagonists can swallow for more than a few seconds.



Mag .60:
Good things do come in small packages. This is the upgrade to the basic pistol. Squeeze off two shots with one pull of your itchy little trigger finger. Good for drive-by decapitations.

Shotgun:
The be-all, end-all of FPS weapons. It's what mushrooms are to Mario, loop-de-loops are to Sonic, and Pepsi is to Reubus. Kick down a door and shove it up your enemies, uh, nose.



R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - IGUANA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM
Are you ready Tu-rok? (man that's bad)


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What has four digits and a star on its backside? Hasbro Interactive's newest lovable character: Glover. Born from an accident when the castle wizard's gloves flew off in an explosion, Glover has an evil counterpart in the Evil Glove (or what Bubba affectionately refers to as 'the Dirty Glove') which was dipped in the cauldron's unhealthy mixture. The blast also scatters the castle's magical crystals around the world. Upstanding and clean glove that you are, it's your job to return the magical crystals to the castle.



At first glance, *Glover* is a 3D platformer a la *Banjo Kazooie*, just not as colorful. But after playing through it for a while, I was pleased to discover that *Glover* plays nothing like *Banjo* or *Mario*. It's actually closer to *Tomb Raider* in terms of gameplay because there's a heavy emphasis on puzzle-solving and 'switch flipping' (well... it's actually button pressing in this one).

Following the explosion in the beginning of the game, each of the magical crystals turned into a rubber ball. Once Glover finds the ball on a level, he can travel faster by palming it, walk on it to "swim," dribble it up stairs, throw it at enemies/buttons, transform it (there's a rubber, bowling, lead, and glass ball), or bounce on it to go higher; Sir Glove (for convenience, I refer to Glover as a "he") can also pick up power-ups which enable him to move faster, become stronger, walk on walls, etc. Your goal is to escort the ball/crystal to the end of the level.

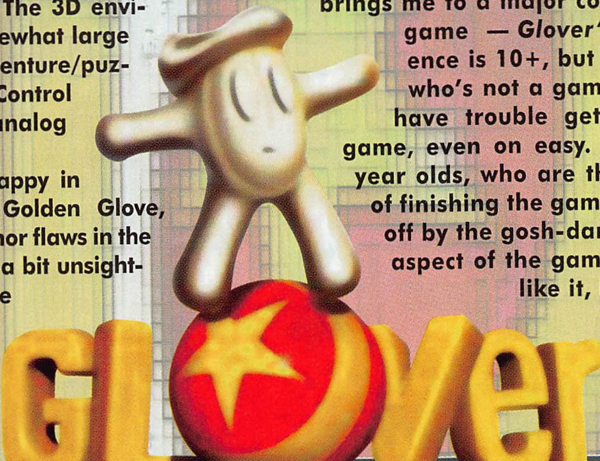




What has four digits and a star on its backside?

The animation in *Glover* is abundant. He fist slams, backpedals, dribbles, shoots (the ball), jumps, flips, cartwheels, pushes, waves 'hello,' sits on a ledge, crawls, walks, and runs. The 3D environments are somewhat large for an action/adventure/puzzle/platformer. Control in the game is analog and necessary.

But all is not happy in the land of the Golden Glove, there are a few minor flaws in the game: Draw-in is a bit unsightly, and there's the occasionally skewed camera angle which is inadeq uate or unfriendly.



Even though it looks like a kiddy game, *Glover's* puzzles are challenging and some of the platform elements require a high degree of skill to navigate. Which brings me to a major concern about the game — *Glover's* target audience is 10+, but any 10 year old who's not a gaming prodigy will have trouble getting far in the game, even on easy. And most 15+ year olds, who are the ones capable of finishing the game, will be turned off by the gosh-darn-it-I'm-so-cute aspect of the game. In the end, I like it, but I don't know if 10 year olds who can't get through the first level will like it. *E*



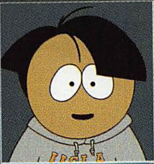


R REVIEW

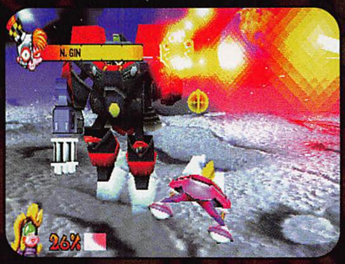
NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - HASBRO
PUBLISHER - HASBRO
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW



EGGO
I'm a Glover, not a fighter.



Crash Bandicoot Warped

In its third installment, the *Crash* series still looks strong, but it's beginning to show the tell-tale signs of franchise aging. *Crash 3: Warped* continues to offer a high level of gaming enjoyment but shows less of the originality and ground-breaking gaming that elevated *Crash* (and to a lesser extent, *Crash 2*) to the upper echelons of PlayStation titles.

The graphics have forged onward, delivering some of the slickest and most stunning visuals available for the system. This, coupled with the inclusion of the new styles of gameplay, keep the *Crash* experience lively, but far from fresh; something's rotten in Bandicoot-ville. New to this series, these styles of gaming are old-hat in much older games (where they are done much better, in some cases) and thus will seem as familiar as Big Bubba taking his pig for a 'walk' on Saturday nights. This is not to say that they detract from the overall product — far from it. Being able to fly a plane and ride a motorcycle, while also partaking in hard-core platform madness, make for a kind of gaming triathlon. Question is: are you an iron man, or are you more akin to Reubus after two (OK, one and a half) push ups? So, yes, the goals and means to obtain them have changed nary a bit. Break the boxes, collect the peaches (or are they nectarines?) (ECM's Note: Mangos!) and find the gems. The only new item to pick up are the ankhs, obtainable only if you successfully best the level time trials.




IN THE AIR...



Barnstorming has never been so much fun (just ask Randy Rhoads) and in *Crash 3*, you can take to the air as either Baron Von Bandicoot or Kamikaze Coco. Experience total freedom of movement in this completely 3D environment. You'll enjoy the high-flyin' action of the WWI dogfight as well as the thrill of carpet bombing and zeppelin deflating. Then make a hyperspace jump into the future, where you'll pilot a spaceship, Duck Dodgers style, against the evil boss N. Gin and his dual-fisted, chain gun fury.



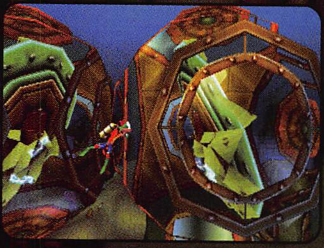





FROM THE SEA...



For the first time ever, Crash dons a snorkel and flippers and dives into the Deep Blue. Expect to bump noses with watery denizens like the puffer fish, bandicoot-eating shark, and moray eel. Floating mines and electrically charged turbines add to the list of things considered dangerous to divers, so watch out!



Common to all of these levels is the use of an underwater 'ski-doo' which can fire missiles and give Crash a burst of speed. This vehicle will be pivotal in the completion of the underwater levels; its missile capability will be needed to blow up beds of coral, which hide those pesky boxes.




A NEED FOR SPEED











One of your tasks will be to collect all of the level ankhs. To do this, you must re-enter each world and attempt a time trial. Pick up the stopwatch and then make a Michael Johnson-like run for it. The items and obstacles will remain unchanged, but some of the boxes will turn into time bonus pick-ups to help keep your clock time low. If you die during this phase, don't sweat it because you won't lose a life. Many of the level times will be unattainable until much later in the game, when you'll earn the special 'run' move.

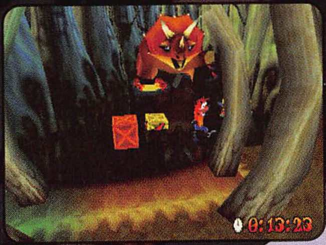
When you've earned the level's silver ankh you can then go back and try for the gold ankh upgrade. Be prepared for some seat-of-your-pants speed though, because to get the gold ankh you have to be fleet of foot in a way known to no other bandicoot; though a certain hedgehog may know something about that.

DEJA VU









Any experienced *Crash* player will recognize two of *Crash 3*'s game styles. First there's the "joyride," as I like to call it. Hop on the back of [insert wily animal here] and guide it through an obstacle course riddled with pits, crazy critters and fallen debris. This time out, Coco and Crash catch rides from a cute little tiger and a dinosaur baby. Run amok atop the Great Wall of China and through the tar pits and lava flows of the prehistoric ages.

You'll also recognize the chase sequences in which Crash is running for his life from a stampeding triceratops. Much like the *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-ish runaway boulder in the first *Crash* and the Coca Cola bear in the second, you must hurdle objects, avoid chasms, and break all the boxes in order to successfully complete this section. None of these encounters are particularly difficult, though, since they are nothing more than retreads from past titles — and some of these grooves are getting mighty deep. Still, seeing that three-horned terror breathing down your neck can be quite invigorating.

OH, THAT NAUGHTY BANDICOOT!!!

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES...









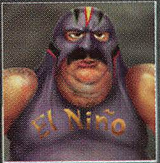


The third style of gameplay included in *Crash 3* is the road race. Hop on your hog and put the pedal to the metal. These levels are less obstacle courses than flat-out sprints to the finish line. In order to earn the crystals, you must come in first place, and to do that you must hit all of the turbo spots and ramps (although the first race, *Hog Wild*, is very easy, giving you plenty of room to screw up).

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAUGHTY DOG	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SCEA	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



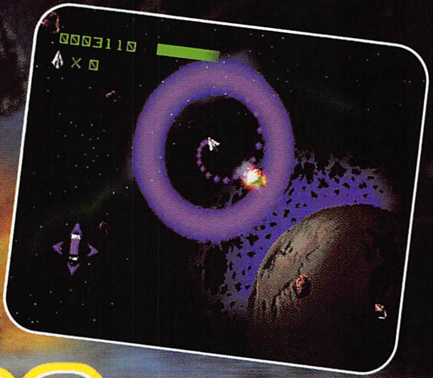
EL NIÑO
Can't teach a naughty dog new tricks...



Nashville's debut season
Yzerman named MVP
Francis joins Carolina
Kick save by Fuhr
Daze shoots on goal
Smith clears the puck
All 27 NHL® Teams and Over 600 Players
Featuring the expansion Nashville Predators™
Authentic Team Play Styles
Teams scouted by Stanley Cup MVP Steve Yzerman
Advanced Coaching Strategies
Set style for physical play, power plays and penalty killing
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YET ANOTHER CASE OF RETRO-ROCK!

ASTEROIDS







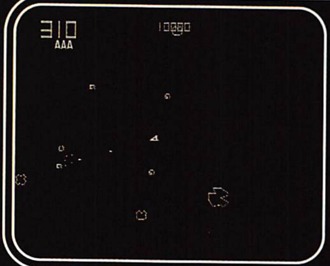


The year was 1979 and considering I was only 3 years old at the time I never really got out to the local arcades much to play *Asteroids*; I was too busy harnessing my super powers for other tasks like drooling and eating lots of paste. And in '81, when *Asteroids* was released on the Atari 2600, I was still a bit too young to have any real recollection of this classic arcade masterpiece. In fact I can't really pinpoint exactly when in time I had my first encounter with *Asteroids*, though I'm sure it was quite enjoyable. Either way these days have seen a serious return to just about anything retro: clothes, music, and yes, video games. It seems almost all the big companies that released arcade games throughout the '80s are now re-releasing them on PlayStation. But for the most part, the majority of these games don't really receive much of a facelift and are generally released as dust-caked relics (mainly relying on emulation instead of giving them complete overhauls). Surprisingly though, this particular revival of *Asteroids* has seen a makeover of Jenny Jones proportions.

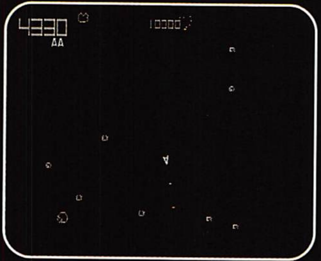
The first real improvements you'll notice come in the form of a very impressive CG intro. Soon, though, you get a real feel for the immediate improvement to the in-game graphics. Huge polygonal asteroids of El Niño proportions careen out of control towards your tiny, Eggo-sized vessel. Obviously, certain elements such as the basic look of your ship (still looks like an arrowhead) and the sound effects of your main gun were left virtually untouched to add a certain degree of nostalgic bliss. However, the explosions of both the asteroids and your ship have been seriously updated with brilliant colors and fantastic lens flares (I can hear ECM screaming from here...).

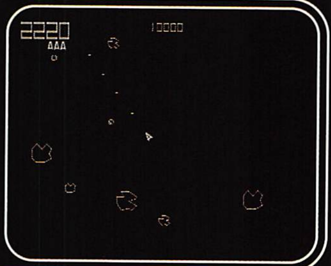
This time around you have the option to choose from three different spacecraft, each replete with unique levels of rotation, thrust, shield, and firepower. The control is also classic *Asteroids*... A bit of thrust here, a little hyperspace there and aim for the top of the screen and wind up at the bottom. All in all, the same old *Asteroids* with some fancy 32-bit makeup.

A pretty rippin' update, and probably the best example of such so far on the 32/64-bit consoles (helps me forget the horror of *Frogger*, <shudder>). Exactly what you'd expect from Mike Latham and company over at Syrox Development (*X-Men* is next!). One thing about *Asteroids* that's certainly stood the test of time is that I still suck miserably at this game. ***JF***



Who needs blazing colors, incredible polygons and amazing transparencies when you've got...vector graphics? The game you loved/hated is back, and it's yours free with any purchase of updated Asteroids. Of course, you'll have to find it first. This blast from the past will (literally) rock your world.





R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SYROX	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW

?

JACE FURY
Shaken, not stirred? Hell, no: On the rocks!

BAD PUNS COURTESY OF REUBUS







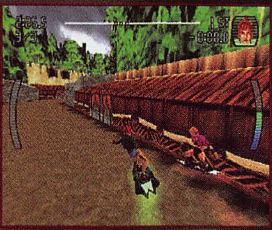














"...armed with a beefy engine that accents lush graphics and seamless racing..."

Streak

hoverboard racing

Under the watchful eye of GT Interactive, SingleTrac (makers of the Jet Moto and Twisted Metal series) has been hard at work on their newest racing title, Streak. A hoverboard racing game, Streak fuses the concepts of Jet Moto and CoolBoarders with the look of Road Rash.

The time is the present and throughout the country, secret races are held between the denizens of a strange sub-culture: Streakers. Using a contraband technology known as GEM, these Streakers carve up the air with high-tech hoverboards. What is GEM, exactly? Well, none of the participants know, for sure, but they intend to find out... and to do so, they must win all of the tournament races.

Anyone familiar with SingleTrac's past titles, such as Jet Moto, Twisted Metal, and, more recently, Rogue Trip, should have a pretty good idea as to what to expect. The cast of ten Streakers each has individual traits which effect three separate areas of hoverboard operation: top speed, acceleration and control. There are a total of 12 tracks to race, but only 6 are immediately available.



While the tracks look great, the course design is a little suspect. It can be difficult to discern some of the obstacles and some corners are just too sharp. Making things even tougher on the racer is the speed at which the game plays, coupled with some awkward control. Streak's engine is impressive, allowing for a high frame rate and some blistering speed. Unfortunately, this speed can work against you since the hoverboard control is very twitchy. Most of the time you end up playing bumper cars instead of racing.

The most annoying facet of Streak is its trick mechanics. To allow for freestyle trick performance, you must gain air and then you are able to perform anything you want, assuming you have the time to do it. The problem is that every time you get air, you'll start to perform a trick instead of steer. That can make things a little complicated if you are just bouncing over an object or coming high off a wall.

Streak, despite its control problems, will none-the-less please some. With some major practice you can get a handle on the seemingly sporadic control. Also, the adjustable skill levels can make it easier for you to recover and win despite bouncing off walls, duffing tricks and getting turned around.

In the end, though, it is only some that will be pleased. Most will be frustrated by the gameplay and turned off by the story, which is far from compelling (finding out where exactly that GEM technology came from really didn't seem all that important, after awhile). Streak, while armed with a beefy engine that accents lush graphics and seamless racing, still can't overcome its sub-par course design and flighty control. ***EN***

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SINGLETRAC
PUBLISHER - GT INTERACTIVE
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-4
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
Put your pants back on!







They call it the Collapse, a freak accident resulting in a nuclear launch and counterstrike. When the dust cleared, less than a million people survived. What's left of humanity had to fend for itself and rediscover technology thought lost forever—now that's about as original as it gets.



WARZONE 2100

Judging from this preview disc, *War Zone 2100* looks a lot like *Command and Conquer*. The gameplay is similar, a moderate-paced real-time strat; while the theme is post-apocalyptic like *Shadowrun* or the PC game *Fallout*.

Because much of the technology has been lost in the Collapse, it has to be rediscovered by researching 400 new technologies, including TV/VCR repair, physician's assistant, or even accounting! OK, OK, so it isn't exactly like that. We'll go more in-depth on those come review time.

Other promising features include link cable compatibility, a fast-play mode, and customizing your own units. The 24 fast-play missions start with all your buildings placed and a bunch of units ready for action. This option, which the hard-core player will frown upon, is a godsend for the less patient (ECM and his ilk need not apply). All your units are there and raring to go, so it's possible to jump right into the action. Fast-play also shifts the emphasis away from building and production and moves it more towards combat.



War Zone's most interesting feature is designing your own units. Choose what type of turret goes on your tank, select the treads, pick which body you want... With over 2,000 possibilities, you'll be able to customize the unit of your dreams and put it in mass production. All of the aspiring Henry Fords will be in design heaven.

The environments are 3D, with a rotating camera that spins around your unit if you don't move it right away. Terrain has elevation, and this plays an important part in the fighting too. Take the high road and rain death and destruction on a hapless foe (much like me against Dangohead).

Right now, Eidos looks like they're well on their way to making a contender in the 'point and click' real-time strat realm. We'll be back with a final verdict when the reviewable drops by the office. *E*







P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EIDOS	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - EIDOS	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - 1ST QTR. '99



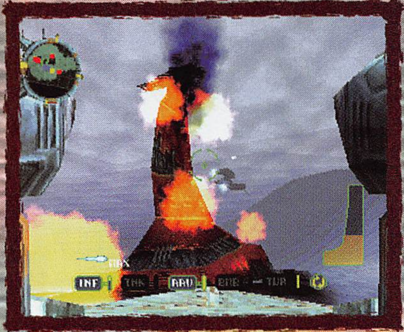
EGGO
Tanks a lot!




Uprising X




"...*Uprising X* is a near-perfect port of the PC version..."

Innovative and highly acclaimed, *Uprising* sprang upon a video game world filled with *Quake*-heads and *WarCraft* insomniacs by combining elements of both and delivering a unique blend of 3D corridor shooting madness, frenzied troop and vehicle management, and strategic building tactics. So you can imagine my delight when those lads at Cyclone Studios decided to ambitiously port this title to the PlayStation. And after playing this game for quite some time, *Uprising X* is a near perfect port of the PC version.

Starting off with an FMV intro that's a bit similar to *Star Wars*, you, as the sole pilot of the highly advanced Wraith Tank, must lead the Rebellion to overcome the remaining forces of the evil Imperium. All gameplay takes place within your Wraith Tank, though this game is far from being a first person blast-fest.

The main base cannon is your initial weapon; but picking up icons scattered throughout the battlefield enables you to fire missiles, variable bursts of energy, and other weapons. Before you try taking on a whole army of Imperium scum, you'll need help from the Rebellion forces. Call in infantry, tank, and air units for support, especially when taking out an Imperium base. And in order to do that, you'll need to build your own base with factories that will be able to produce massive amounts of scum-smashing units. This mixture of *Quake*-like slaughterhouse madness, with tactical strategy production brings a shred of originality to a genre more tired than Bubba after a weekend of cow-tipping and rum-running. Toss in some excellent Dual Shock analog control using BOTH analog pads (we need more games that use both analog pads, btw. ECM's Note: Amen to that!) and *Uprising X* seems flawless, no?

Well, not quite. Graphically, the game pales considerably next to its bigger, better PC sibling. While it's not quite fair to compare a 3Dfx accelerated PC game to a 32 bit PlayStation rev, the graphic quality in *Uprising X* is best described as 'first generation' in an *Agile Warrior* sort of way (gentlemen, start your shuddering... <brrrr>). Pop-up is abundant, and while it doesn't interfere with gameplay, it's far from being attractive. While some enemies are nicely detailed, infantry units can be extremely pixelated at times. Sounds are a mishmash of above-average battle cries ("Send them home in a body bag!") to the annoying Training commander who sounds like a muffled, ecstatic Homer Simpson: "Mmmm, donuts...".

In the end, *Uprising X* is one of the very few unfortunate games that have great gameplay and controls but below average graphics... in fact, I can't even think of a PlayStation game that follows the good gameplay/bad graphics format. It's too bad, since most kids that pick up this game will drop the controller after five minutes of sub-standard visuals without appreciating *Uprising X*'s deep gameplay and flawless control. *D*

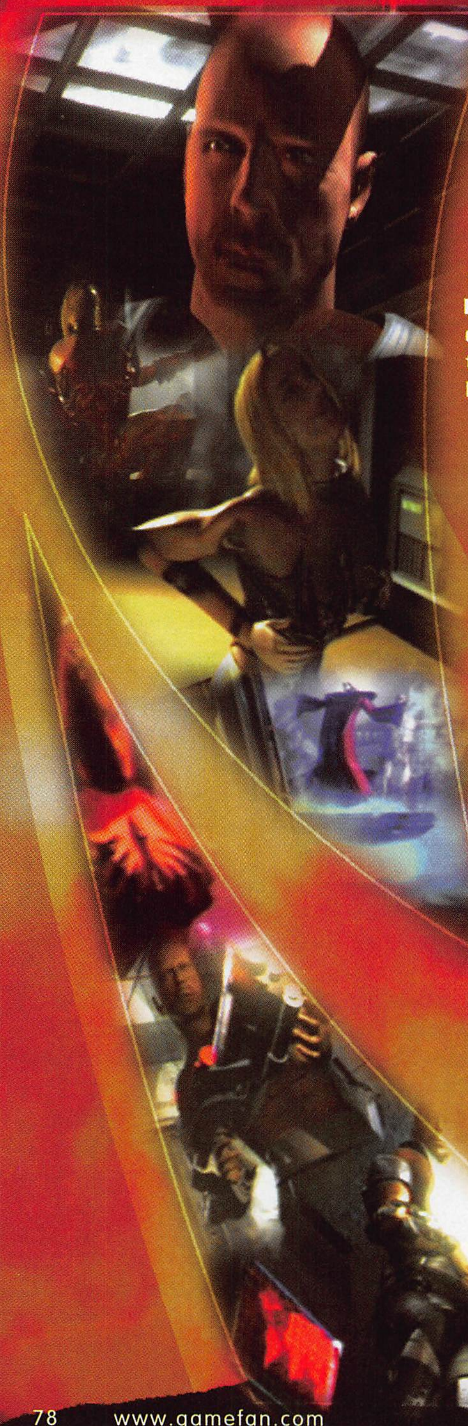
REVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CYCLONE	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - 3DO	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



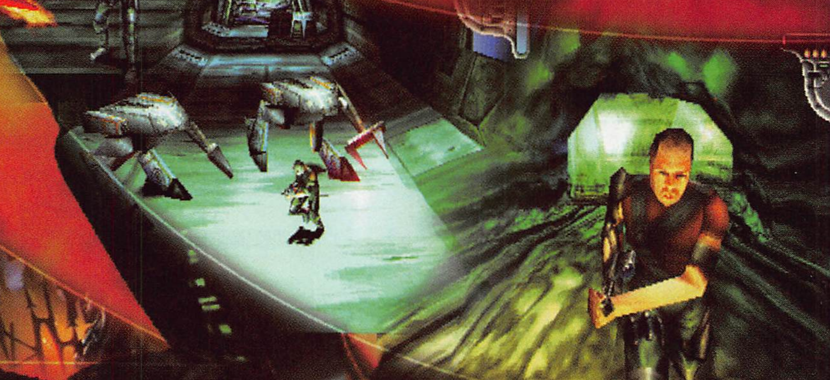
DANGOHEAD
"Sir, they're flanking us with pop-up!"

APOCALYPSE



If there's one video game axiom I've paid homage to time and time again, it's "if it moves, kill it." That phrase has successfully guided my hands through countless shooters, FPSs (First Person Shooters), and even the occasional lunch at GF HQ (pesky editors — taste good with butter, though). With the release of the fullest realization of that philosophy in ASC/Visual Concepts' *One* late last year, I've been hankerin' for something to give me that adrenaline-burning, eye-searing, tail-kicking feeling all over again. And lo and behold, it looks like I've found it in Activision/Neversoft's *One*-inspired (that's putting it mildly... very mildly) action-assault, *Apocalypse*. Grab that Dual Shock and hold on — this one's gonna be intense!

Despite this game's near-death at the hands of Activision's internal studio, the brilliant team over at Neversoft rescued it with an all-guns-blazing engine: fast is not quite adequate to describe the speeds at which it runs. Imagine, if you will, blazing frame rates, insane poly counts, and some of the most intense boss encounters this side of *G-Darius*; weapon effects alone are composed of over 700 polys (that's more than the characters in most PS games). True, it can slowdown pretty heavily at some of the more intense, poly-choked points, but overall this game is a feast for








the eyes.

The more astute readers out there will remark that this game looks, plays, and feels a whole lot like ASC's *One*. The fact is, it's virtually a clone of that absolutely amazing game. As I always say, though, if you're gonna copy something, copy the best (and this is about as close as copies come without inviting legal action). Thankfully, though, despite their similarities, *Apocalypse* throws a few wrinkles into the formula such as rocking, multi-directional analog blasting. Using the second analog stick to control the direction of your weapon, you have a virtually limitless number of angles from which to launch an assault. In fact, this was the feature that *One* so desperately needed. Not to mention much more intense levels of violence: enemies scream when you burn them and erupt in geysers of integral bodily fluids as you tear through them with the RIP laser and homing missiles. If you're into games that the 32-bit *Contra* should have been, this one is for you.





To top it all off, *Apocalypse* gets the full, multimedia treatment (please hold back on the groans for a moment, please): action hero extreme, Bruce Willis actually 'plays' the role of Trey Kincade, the character you control throughout the game. As well as being a recognizable model in the game, he stars in each of the rendered movie sequences sprinkled throughout the game. Alas, the 'acting' contained in such sequences is sorta suspect — Bruce Campbell does the job just a bit better than the mega-bucks required by Mr. Willis. And since the acting gets the full, celeb treatment, some of the in-game music is contributed by none other than Poe, who made her video game debut in Sega's *Enemy Zero* (though I was hoping they would have nabbed *Smashing Pumpkins* as they had originally planned, <sigh>).





Negatives? Well, the aforementioned slow-down can become a bit of an aggravation, but the single biggest sticking point in this title is the sometimes-less-than-appealing camera angle. Sure, the computer-controlled camera does its best most of the time, but at some points you'll find yourself dying repeatedly due to snapped positioning (I almost went into a Reubus-like, controller hurling frenzy... almost). If this was a movie, the director would have been sorely lashed by the editor. Just be aware that you're gonna die at numerous points, numerous times due to the uncooperative camera man (that guy should have his union card revoked — where's Lakitu when ya' need him?).

What we have here, people, is the action champ of the year for the PS-only crowd (the crown still goes to the mighty *Metal Slug 2* off in Neo-Geo cart land). For those of you that passed on *One* last year, here's your chance to redeem yourselves and show the publishers of the world that we want bullet-choked, body count-ridden games that don't take place in the first-person perspective. Now, about a sequel on Dreamcast... ***ECM***




P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NEVERSOFT
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW

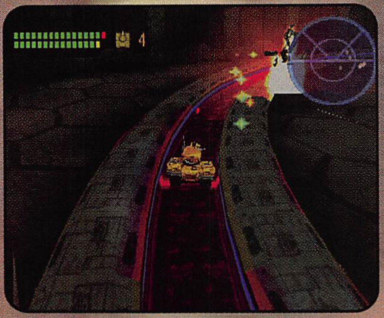


ECM
One serious case of deja vu...

You've heard us prattling on about this game ever since we saw it at E3. MGM Interactive has invested a great deal of time, effort, and money into what is clearly their pet project (although I would have preferred to see them use that energy on the *Rollerball* title they keep alluding to). *Tiny Tank: Up Your Arsenal* may not be the adrenaline-pumping future sport of *Rollerball*, but it certainly demands to be noticed... and is.







THE STORY UP UNTIL NOW...

One hundred years earlier, humans had finally grown weary with their war-like manners. This couldn't have come at a more inopportune time for SenTrax, a Pentagon defense contractor. They had just developed a sentient tank, capable of waging war without the threat of loss to human life. SenTrax needed a way to sell the American public on its new weapon of mass destruction. A mascot was created: Tiny Tank. A miniature "cute" version of the intelligent tank, Tiny peddled the new tanks to the government; then something went awry (as it always seems to)...

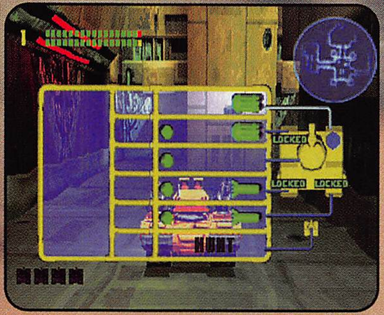
A robot by the name of MuTank led a revolution against the humans, decimating the population and driving the survivors underground. There would be no stopping the machines from taking over the world...

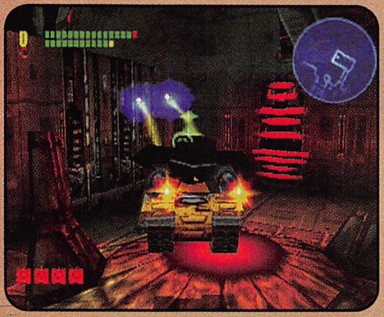
One tank, however, did not revolt and chose to defend the humans from the mechanical menace: Tiny Tank. Up against an army of steel death, Tiny fights for the remnants of humankind.





TINY TANK





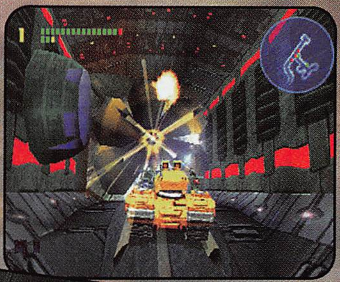
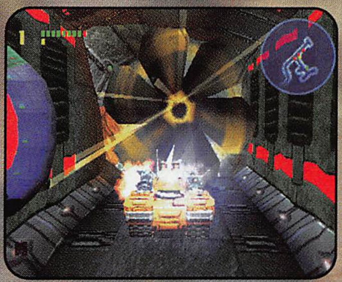
THE BLUEPRINTS

Tiny Tank is a marvel of modern weaponry, built entirely out of Nanometal — a new alloy that is incredibly strong and lightweight. The tank has two propulsion systems for maximum maneuverability. For basic movement, Tiny Tank utilizes standard issue treads, allowing for all-terrain mobility and stationary turning. Also included are a set of repulsor lifts for jumping and barrel-rolling; effective when used for evasive measures.

Tiny Tank is designed for maximum firepower as well. Fashioned with two standard issue weapons and slots for up to five more, Tiny Tank packs a solid punch, with the ability to customize and upgrade destructive capabilities. There are 10 weapon upgrades available and each has unique properties. Some types of weapons are less effective, or even ineffective, against certain dangers, so place them wisely; a dumb tank is a dead tank.

Each weapon slot is designed to hold up to five positronic brain cells. These cells enhance weapon efficiency and AI. The more cells allocated to a weapon, the smarter and more powerful it becomes, until it is able to operate completely on its own.



THE SCOOP

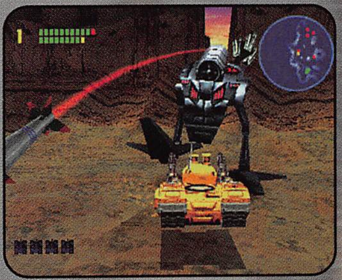



Tiny Tank: UYA is a marvelous title, combining classic shooter elements with clever game design and some stellar graphics and playability. The engine is impressive, maintaining a high frame rate and little polygonal break-up to boot. The levels are distinct in look and each offers its own set of interesting challenges and formidable bosses. There are 13 levels in all.

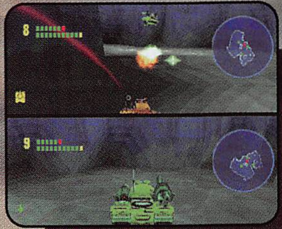
While I'm not sure who started the fad (although I suspect *Gex* may may have had something to do with it), it seems as though everyone is following suit with games infused with smart-alecky humor and banter in the form of voice acting. Most of the time this can be quite excruciating to sit through (case in point: *Blasto*, *A Bug's Life* and *Gex*) but *Tiny Tank: UYA* manages to pull it off. With edgy and contemporary dialogue, the humor will entertain older gamers as well as the younger crowd. A loveable smart-ass? I wouldn't have guessed it, but it works — and the game is better for it.

Also included is a continuous feed of radio transmissions from a robot disc jockey. Much like the radio effect in *Grand Theft Auto*, this background chatter offers still more in the way of amusement without getting annoying.

MGM Interactive (under the auspices of the Ed Anunziata-powered And Now, the designer responsible for some of Sega's finest hours), who impressed us with their first title, *War Games*, follows up with a sophomore effort that outclasses many of the action games currently available. *Tiny Tank: Up Your Arsenal* offers gamers the type of frenetic gameplay and splashy pyrotechnics that should accent any game that puts big guns front and center. Every PlayStation owner should give this tank a spin.

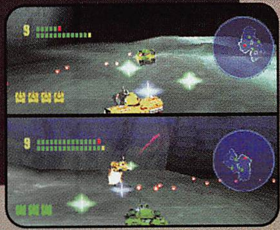









Avoid 2-player mode if at all possible. The control is terrible and the action is anemic.



R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - APPALOOSA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - MGM INTER.	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
Don't tread on me (nyuk nyuk...)

Twisted Metal III



The question facing 989 Studios upon undertaking the development of *Twisted Metal 3*, the sequel to what is arguably one of the most pivotal franchises in the PlayStation's brief but brilliant history, was almost as complex as the one facing Sony at the onset of the console's launch: Could a team inexperienced in an established market break into a known arena and take control with a product that would satisfy even the most demanding fan? The challenge presented to the *TM3* team was not an easy one, and if they were to succeed, *Twisted Metal 3* would have to be more than an adequate follow-up to the series that had become a household name in the PlayStation world. The arrival of Activision's upstart *Vigilante 8* and SingleTrac's subliminal sequel, *Rogue Trip*, threw additional obstacles in the way, and even this editor was not quite sure what to think of the idea of a 'bastardized' child of one of his favorite series to ever appear on a next-generation console. Never mind the fact that they had a meager 8 months to cobble something together.





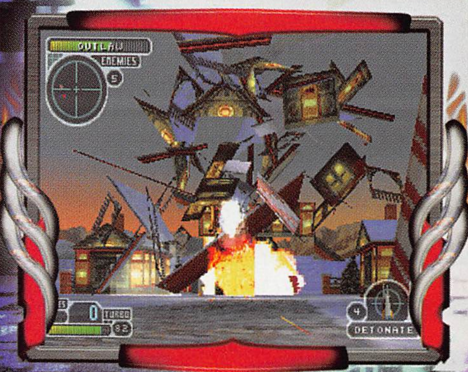
Needless to say, when *Twisted Metal 3* came screaming into the GF offices, a combination of apprehension and excitement demanded that I give it my full attention (that and the fact that I am a *Twisted Metal* nut...). Thankfully, countless hours of blastin' and outlastin' have left me absolutely 'wrecked' with enthusiasm over what is, a few gripes aside, clearly the new king of car combat on the PlayStation. Incredible AI, tight control, and all the personality that made the *TM* series such a memorable experience are bundled together in one of the most intense car-to-car cataclysms you'll ever come across on a console.



Obviously, *V8* instantly created the need to push the envelope in the visuals department, and 989 opted to tackle this newfound focus via a modified version of the *Rally Cross* engine. The final results were fairly impressive and although they fell a little short of the water-mark set by LuxoFlux, still managed to make some drastic improvements over the *TM*'s of the past. Most notable in this area are the vehicles themselves, which have received an incredible shot in the arm (Spectre and Warthog are excellent examples). Cars appear much sharper and the level of detail, from paint jobs right down to the drivers turning their heads as you steer, are a welcome addition to the game. Also impressive are the special effects, with some mind-blowing explosions and ominous lighting effects. Pretty slick stuff.



As much as I'd like to dissect the differences, the aforementioned development switch had me more worried about gameplay than anything else, so I'm not gonna continue to nitpick on the merits of this one's visuals with other titles. The focus of any game worth it's asphalt is fun, baby, and my primary concern was this: Could 989 deliver all the vehicular violence that I



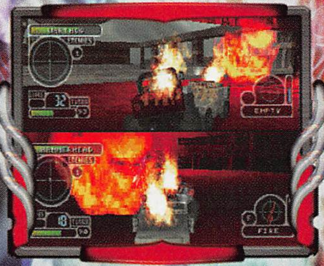










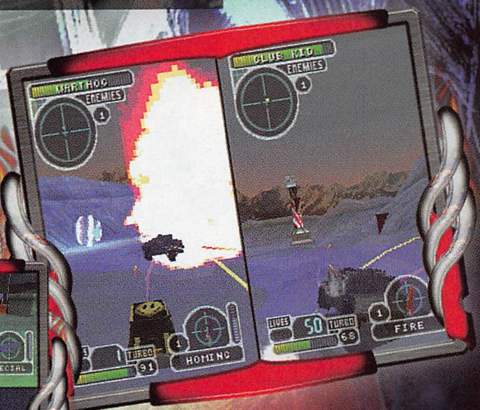


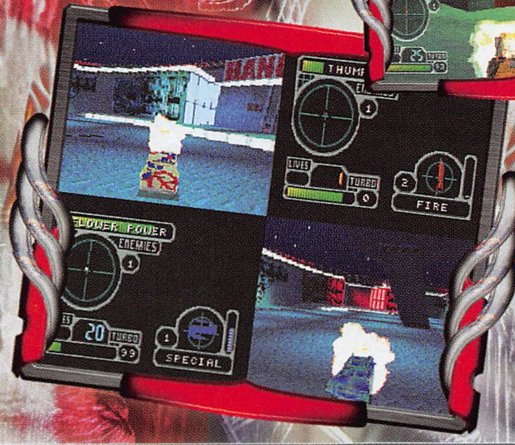

had come to expect from a *Twisted Metal* title, or would I be stuck with, as some editors hastily labeled this title, a mere excuse for a sequel? Well, I hate to break it to the cynics, but *Twisted Metal 3*'s gameplay is about as good as it gets in this genre, folks, and regardless if you are new to the carnage or a seasoned veteran, *TM3* packs a trunk-load of excitement that will keep you on the edge of your seat for weeks. The control is practically flawless (save the occasionally overzealous tight turn button and some over-the-top physics issues), and the AI just plain brilliant. I actually found myself attempting to mimic their strategies at times to give myself an advantage. Cars will circle you, jump enemy fire, 'babysit' heals (*TM* fans will know what I mean here), run away when in trouble, and use a stage's geography to 'level' (hehehe) you with authority. The final AI has been dumbed down a bit, but with the difficulty up, *TM3* will give even the most experienced *Twisted Metal* fan a run for his money.

Obviously, the gameplay is only as good as the courses you cause carnage on, and this is probably the one area where *Twisted Metal 3* really manages to anger me. Not because the level design on the whole falls short, but because while some levels (like the North Pole and London) will knock your socks off, other levels just fall flat on their faces (like Egypt...ack). Personally, I expect a little more out of my environments than a glorified sandbox, and for the most part, *TM3* delivers, but there is still the occasional mechanical mosh-pit, and I'm just not sure that with the way the genre has evolved these levels still have a place in car combat. Just my two cents... On a positive note, *TM3* has opted to include a lot of interactive elements in most of the levels, and you have to know your levels well to truly dominate the game, which is always a plus in the death-match department.

Lastly, I'd like to look at personality, as it has always played a big part in the series. While certain elements just don't seem to grab me like they have in the past (where are my pedestrians?!), the car designers did a good job of creating distinct strategies and control for each vehicle, which adds a huge boost to replay value, and the characters are pretty friggin' cool. Say all you want about a bloody windshield, but for my money I'd rather have the urge to go through the game with each vehicle than smush a few helpless onlookers... The slammin' soundtrack featuring the ominous tunes of one Rob Zombie and multiple voice-overs are just icing on an already tasty cake...

So what's the bottom line? *Twisted Metal 3* is an interesting animal. In one sense it's not your typical *TM* game and in this it loses a little of the fruitiness that made it so big in the first place, but a lot of that insanity was sacrificed at the sake of improved realism and control, which I'll take over a few laughs any day. 989 did a good job of sticking with what worked, and working out what didn't, and if you are a fan of the original, there is no question in my mind that you'll dig this one. An impressive effort. ***BB***






REVIEW | PlayStation

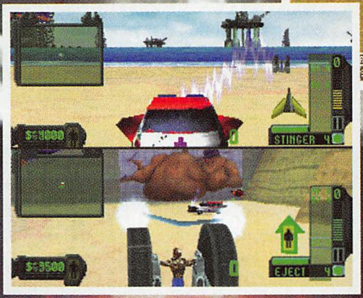
DEVELOPER - 989 STUDIOS	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - 989 STUDIOS	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



Big Bubba
SingleTrac, Schmingle-Trac...

Big Bubba





Twisted Metal III





Graphics Not that I don't applaud Rogue Trip's attempt at some fruity visuals, I personally like a bit of individualism to come through when I'm putting a dent in someone's fender. While I give RT credit for some slick looking environments, anyone can see that both Twisted Metal 3's vehicles and the carnage they cause blow away RT like so many exploding pieces of real-time shrapnel.

Control What can I say? Some people just can't appreciate realism. Yeah, TM3 is a little "tight" in comparison to RT's 'classic' style control , but as much as Rogue Trip may have attempted to deny it, this ain't a cartoon, people, it's car combat. Twisted Metal 3's control is a perfect blend of classic TM insanity and real physics, and the balance it brings in car differentiation just cannot be matched by RT.

Music Hmmm...let's see. When I'm in the middle of a little manslaughter and mayhem, do I wanna "do-dah" around to * EH-HEM * 'Nashville Pussy' or bang some heads in to the dashboard of oblivion to the thunderous tunes of one Rob Zombie? Hell..I don't even have to continue.

Play Mechanics No Contest. Not only does Twisted Metal 3 offer a better variety of special weapons in the sense that there are more than mere projectiles and ram attacks (say all you want for exploding chickens and a giant...erm...weenie, but they are still the same-old, same-old), but it also has a more natural combo set up (what the hell is up with SingleTrac requiring you to hold down a button to input a combo?). Add to that the role physics brings in to car-to-car carnage and some 8 player linked madness and you have a clear cut winner in Twisted Metal 3.

Overall I suppose I can see how a fruit like Teeter would like Rogue Trip better (throw in a RuPaul character and it prolly woulda snagged his Game of the Year...), but for those of you who actually played the first two Twisted Metal titles, this year's rev is the logical evolution for a series that needed a good shot in the arm beyond a few jokes and a big name soundtrack. Maybe Teeter's got a thing about playing with a giant wiener (I could run so far with that one, but I'll be kind), but for my money, I'd rather see the genre get better with age, and the only things TM3 'sold out' to are advancements in play mechanics, AI, and visuals, which are all great examples of why Twisted Metal 3 smacks down Rogue Trip like Ike on Tina. 'Nuff Said.

Graphics Take a look at Twisted Metal 3 in motion. Looks nice, right? But wait, keep looking. Oh, what's that? Yep, that game's sure smooth, nice and attractive like. But after awhile, it becomes real ugly, especially when the textures don't sit still, an' keep hopping all around. Does Rogue Trip have that? Nope, those nice folk at Singletrac decided that the classic look was better, so everything looks a lot like Twisted Metal 2. Nothing really fancy, but nice and smooth. Hey, does Twisted Metal have explodin' chickens? I didn't think so...

Control Maybe it's just me (and I'm sure it's not) but the control in Rogue Trip is sooooooo much better than Twisted Metal 3, it's not just funny, it's hilarious! Now don't go telling me that Twisted Metal controls better because it's more 'realistic', because it just ain't so! Why do I say that? Well, unless they've put someone's grandma in a jeep, given her enough weapons to take out say, Africa and set her on her merry way to obliterate some wack-jobs, how the heck do they know if it's realistic? A racing game that controls better WITHOUT the analog? That's supposed to be good control? Yeah right, you take your little Twisted Metal and go play in traffic

Music Now I love game music as much as anyone (well, maybe more than most) so I kinda hold it to a different standard. I'm all for getting a famous musician or group for the background music, but Rob Zombie? Hey, I actually felt DEPRESSED after playing Twisted Metal 3. I'm not saying it's not appropriate for Twisted Metal, but playing that whole 'Christmas Town' stage with that malcontent grating along in the background...ugh...But then, I really don't like the Mighty Mighty Bostonnes either, but I'll take their happy slappy style over Rob Zombie any day.

Play Mechanics Unfortunately (for them, ha ha!) Twisted Metal 3 falls into the same set 'o problems that plagued Super Mario Kart 64. In their attempt to create cooler weapons and implement some new ideas, they completely looked over the concept of 'fair play'. Now, some cars are FAR superior to others, some weapons are too powerful and worst of all, the whole concept of smashing into your enemies is...broken. How could they?! And their idea of 'combos'...? Puh-leeeze!! There's more ways to disable your opponent in Twisted Metal than there should be, resulting in a severely unbalanced game of getting the pick 'o the litter. All I have to say is, you can take out an airplane with a giant hot-dog in Rogue Trip. After that, do we really need anything else?! I mean, come on!



Overall I'd hesitate to believe anything my collegue over there says, because he's obviously letting certain 'family connections' influence his judgement. This game's got explodin' chicken, hillbilly racers, and yeah, Bubba's in this one. If he didn't like Rogue Trip, then he's betraying the kinfolk (because in the west, everyone's a relation). You gonna put your trust in a double-dealing farmfolk like that? Point is, this game smashes Twisted Metal 3. Smashes it like a big 'ole box of chickens crossin' the freeway.



ROGUE TRIP™

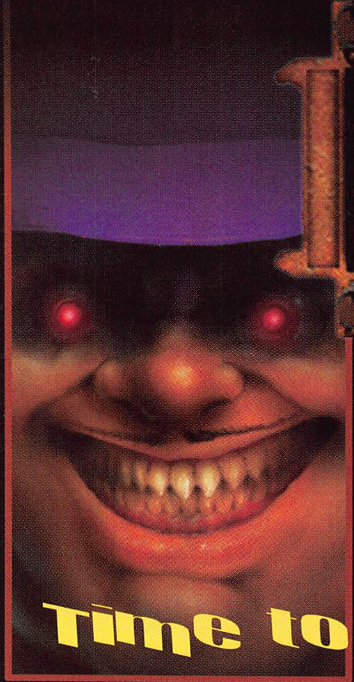
Super Teeter



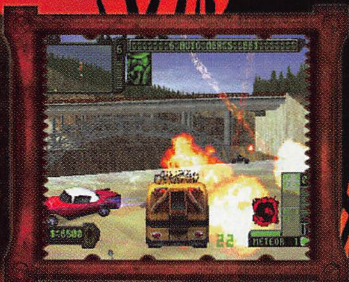




RoGUE TRIP™





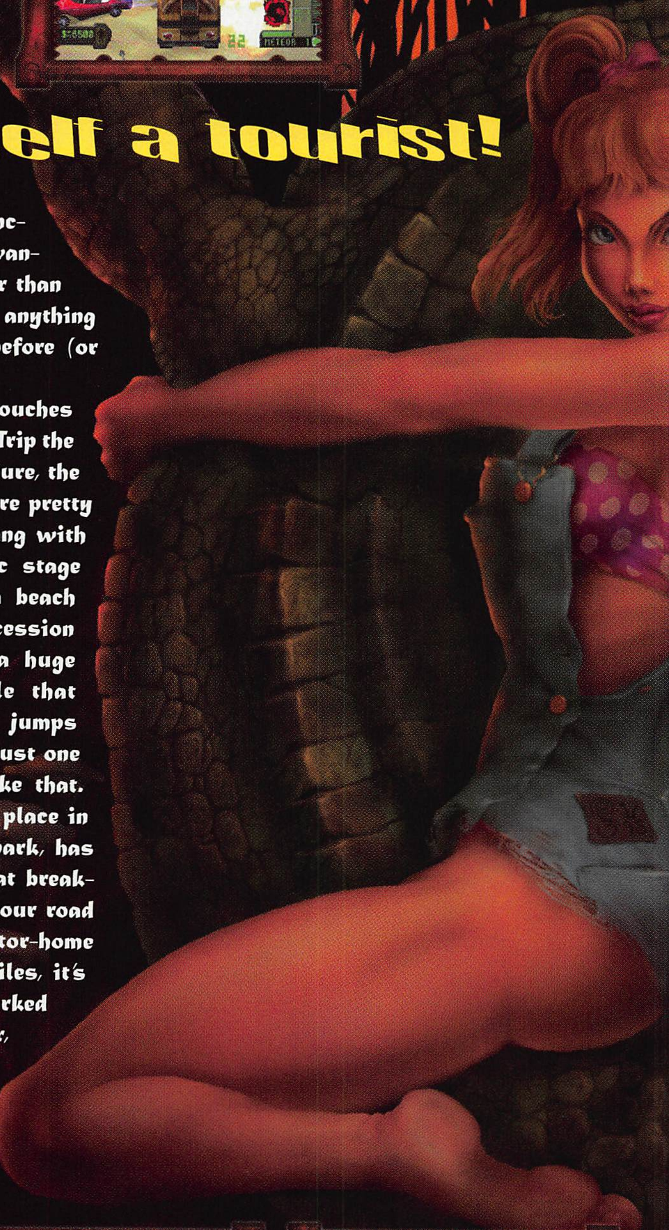


Time to bag yourself a tourist!

One of the PlayStation's first (and best, I might add) games available at launch was the original Twisted Metal. It was new, it was fresh and best of all, it was a heck of a lot of fun. Unfortunately, by the time the sequel was released, I had already grown out of the whole 'car combat' scene so my interest wasn't nearly as high (oh, how I tried to like the sequel!). I figured that maybe, just maybe, this year's glut of 'combat racers' might be able to bring the magic back, to make me a believer again. Sadly, I was wrong and every game in the genre this year (including Vigilante 8, Twisted Metal 3 and the game that's the focus of our attention, Rogue Trip) is so devoid of originality that it hurts – although I suppose originality isn't exactly a prerequisite anymore. Adding new cars, crazy combatants and some really, really strange backgrounds don't make a game new.

Seeing how Rogue Trip isn't the first (or second, or third for that matter!) 'car-combat' game to be released this year, it's only fair to compare it to its nearest competitor, Twisted Metal 3 (oh how the irony bleeds). But between the two, it's a toss-up, with each one having very distinctive advantages (and disadvantages) over the other. Other than that, the effects here aren't anything you haven't already seen before (or done better in Vigilante 8).

But it's the graphics touches that ultimately make Rogue Trip the better looking of the two. Sure, the broken LA bridges in TM3 are pretty cool, but even they can't hang with Rogue Trip's **HUGE** aquatic stage where not only is there a beach (your car can surf!!), concession stands and best of all, a huge water tank with a whale that swims around, then does jumps every so often. And that's just one stage, they're all set up like that. Another stage, which takes place in some sort of recreational park, has you whizzin' over bridges at breakneck speeds, only to have your road blocked by an oncoming motor-home driver. You've got the missiles, it's just too good to pass up. Parked cars become cannon fodder, chickens explode and best of all, everything is soooo fast, and very smooth. The way it should always be!











Just as in Sony's Twisted Metal 3 game, GT's hired the musical talent of the group Mighty Mighty BossTones, as well as the group Nashville Pussy. It's a nice touch, and it's certainly not something you'd expect. So is the music good? Well, I suppose so, that is if you're into these bands. But what if you're not? Well, let's just hope that you've got a mute button.





Perhaps the saddest thing is that these tunes, as happy as they might be, are the game's biggest originality boost. Gee, with music like this, who needs gameplay? Not me, because as everyone knows, we don't play games for their gameplay (unfortunately, sarcasm doesn't go over quite that effectively in writing...)! The sound effects are good, if not a little underplayed by the soundtrack. In fact, the tunes are so loud at times that you CAN'T hear anything else, well maybe a little tire screeching, but that's about it! What's up with that? Hey, when there's a bunch of chickens onscreen, you'd better hear chickens. It just makes sense.



For all you magazine readin' folk out there who don't know, SingleTrac, the developer behind the first two Twisted Metal games, was conveniently snatched up by super-publisher, GT Interactive. While GT has their developers, they didn't have the legal right to produce a Twisted Metal game. Oh well, we've got Rogue Trip now, and to be honest with you, I dig the whole 'Vacation Getaway' theme a lot more than the extremely generic contest one. Any game set in the 'near future' that has a bunch of wack-jobs trying to outbid each other into becoming the best auto-mercenary is a game worth a look!







I'll make it clear here and now by saying that I was NOT a big Vigilante 8 fan. Hey, I'll admit that the graphics were awesome (the best ever seen in ANY car combat game!) and the sound wasn't bad either, but the control was way too messy for my taste and whoever programmed the computer AI...bah! Hey, nothing personal, but to me that game was about as much fun as jogging through LA traffic. And about Twisted Metal 3...oh don't get me started on that one. So in that respect, Rogue Trip is the best 'car-combat' game of the year, for me, anyway. It's still terribly unoriginal, even with some of the cooler weapon choices. Fans of Twisted Metal take note, this is the TRUE successor to TM2, so be wary of that 'other' car-combat game out there. Sure, even with the whole vacation shtick, it's still an excellent addition to an otherwise tired genre... **ST**





R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SINGLE TRAC	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - GT INTERACTIVE	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW

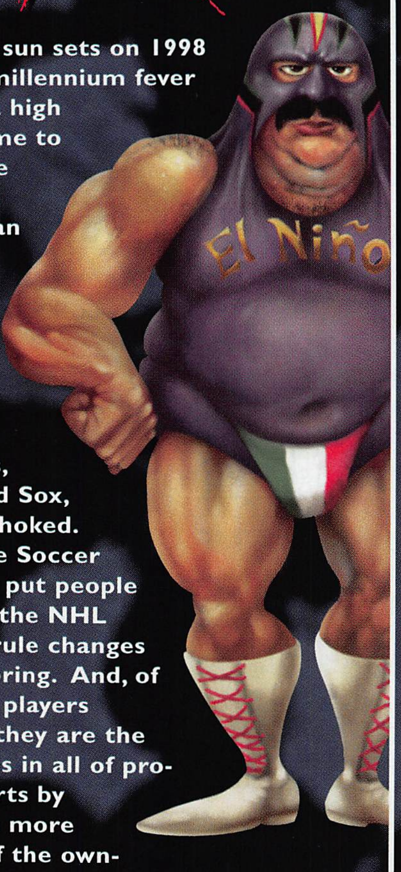


SUPER TEETER
This license needs to be renewed...

GAMEFAN VIEWPOINTS

SPORTS

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



As the sun sets on 1998 and millennium fever hits a high pitch, it is time to reflect on the year in sport games. Jordan and the Bulls sent Utah packing. The Yankees rolled in the World Series, while the Red Sox, once again, choked. Major League Soccer continued to put people to sleep and the NHL made some rule changes to up the scoring. And, of course, NBA players showed why they are the biggest babies in all of professional sports by trying to bilk more money out of the owners and crying all the way through the lock-out. Those guys should take those thumbs they're sucking on and stick them up... well, they should just stick them.

In the video game world, things were a little less hectic. EA and Sony continued to put out quality products, while Nintendo finally got its head in the game and put out a few stellar sports titles of its own. With the ushering in of the new year comes hopes for some kick-ass Dreamcast titles. Our former editor, Joe Kidd, is hard at work on Visual Concept's football sim and I hear it is amazing! Let's hope VC has what it takes to steal some of Sony and EA's thunder. I think it is about time that there was a new sheriff in town (and I don't mean the Video Cowboy, who is more of a Deputy Dog or Barney Fife).

I would also like to announce my candidacy for California governor. If Jesse can run Minnesota, why can't a fat Mexican Wrestler, from a small pueblo at the base of Chupacabra Mountain, run California? Now all I need is a running mate. Has anyone seen Jan-Michael Vincent, recently?

Some editors from other publications dissed this game and they should be shot. It *is* fast, it *does* look better than *NHL 98* and it *is* a ton of fun to play. Goal scoring in cpu vs. cpu games is anemic, and the GAA is messed up, but those are the only major beefs. *NHL 99* offers what most other hockey sims don't: good graphics, smooth gameplay and big hits. Get this game!

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 7 — **92**



NHL 99
PlayStation
EA Canada

It's my favorite time of year, buckaroos: hockey season (I'm Canadian). It's also the time I log plenty of ice-time with the latest hockey titles. EA Sports has created another incredible hockey simulation for the PlayStation. When I thought they couldn't possibly improve the best playing *NHL* title, they astound me again with improved puck physics, better player animations and improved goaltender AI. If you love hockey you will love *NHL 99*.

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 8 — **92**

I love this game! EA has outdone themselves, this year. The fouling is fixed, animations and motion capture are excellent and the gameplay is much more realsitic (with the cpu teams running a much more balanced offense). The commentary lacks the enthusiasm of past titles, but I'm willing to look the other way. My boy Antoine is the poster child this year, so go Celts and go *Live 99*! But where are the rookies?

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 8 · O 7 — **91**



NBA Live 99
PlayStation
EA Canada

Since I don't get an NBA season this year, I'll settle for *Live 99*. But where are the rookies? Where's Paul Pierce? Argh! Other than that, EA's latest is an improvement all-around — more motion capture, more expressions on players' faces, and Shaq even raised the roof after a dunk. And with employee #8 as the poster boy, how can you say no? Now settle this lockout situation so we can see some ball! [ed's note: two Celtic fans at the same office!? In L.A.!?]

G 9 · C 8 · P 9 · M 7 · O 7 — **89**

Yikes! What happened? This game barely resembles its PlayStation counterpart. The graphics are nary a bit better and the control is very suspect. This game resembles *Live 98* more than anything else. Add to this some bad commentary and the lack of anything new to draw gamers and you've got one reason NOT to buy a basketball game. Stick with *NBA Courtside*, it is a much better hoops sim.

G 7 · C 7 · P 7 · M 6 · O 7 — **68**



NBA Live 99
Nintendo 64
EA Canada

It's been a looong wait for a little bit of Live lovin' on the Nintendo 64 from the gang at EA Sports, and after finally getting a chance to sit down with this one, the only thing I can say is "What the hell happened here?" After a stellar performance on both *FIFA* and *Madden*, I expected a little more out of this title, and between the average visuals and a oftentimes frustrating absences in areas such as gameplay and presentation, this one even failed to match up to even *Courtside*...Ugh.

G 7 · C 7 · P 8 · M 6 · O 7 — **71**

While I think developers have to stop making these snowboard games, if they won't listen, then hopefully their products will be as good as *Pro Boarder*. Licensed by the pros, this is one title that delivers the "extreme" (I really hate that term). Two player mode is terrible, though, so so much for playing with your buddy. Oh well, I guess you'll just have to go it alone. Remember, vote El Niño in 2000!

G 8 · C 8 · P 9 · M 8 · O 8 — **86**



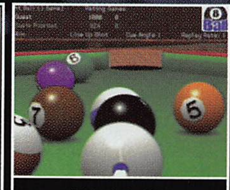
X Games Pro Boarder
PlayStation
EA Sports

What the hell's an emirate, anyway? Ooops, wrong conversation... *Pro Boarders* does a lotta things right, and ends up being a solid game that I'll play for quite a while. Excellent graphics, sweet control, and tricks that are just the right difficulty make this the best 'boarding title since *CoolBoarders 2* and *1080°*. It's just too bad that the tracks ain't circular, 'cause it's hard to lap El Niño on a straight run. Oh, well, I can still soften my landings with his flabby ass...

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 7 · O 7 — **84**

Perfect physics, crisp graphics and a wide variety of billiard options can't hide the fact that this game will bore you to death. RPG elements need to be added! Look at *Backstreet Billiards* and *Pool Hustler*, those games have the RPG element (if not a lesser physics engine) and those same ideas. If you love pool and need to play it, Virtual Pool is for you. The rest of us need more of a reason to play.

G 9 · C 9 · P 8 · M 7 · O 4 — **75**



Virtual Pool 64
Nintendo 64
Crave

Ever since *The Color of Money*, I've fancied myself quite the hustler — too bad I pretty much suck at 'real' pool (now darts, that's another story). That being said, I'm an ace at the video variety, and they don't get much better than this. It may have a completely 'no frills' presentation but it works just fine. El Niño can keep his sissy, pool hall slumming/RPG playing to the snowy peaks of Chupacabra Mountain — I just want to shoot some stick.

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 5 · O 3 — **90**

There are some seriously agitating aspects of *GameBreakers '99*. While the graphics and sound are solid, the passing and blocking can be downright infuriating. It is still too easy to dislodge the ball from recievers, the safeties are omnipotent (always resulting in a tedious double coverage situation) and the offensive line might as well not even be on the field. I thought Bubba was just weak sauce, but he is actually right on the money.

G 8 · C 8 · P 6 · M 8 · O 7 — **75**



NCAA GameBreakers '99
PlayStation
989 Studios

ARGH! [SLAM CONTROLLER HERE] I wanted to love this one — I really did — but the poor AI just kills the passing and blocking aspects of the game. After a few games, I began to fear for the safety of my beloved duel shock due to some serious controller flings.It's a shame, really. A good effort in terms of player control just got lost in the midst of some idiotic teammates. Rent it first.

G 8 · C 9 · P 6 · M 6 · O 6 — **67**

After spending countless hours tear-assing around the tracks of *Gran Turismo*, it was time for a change. *Rally Cross 2* is a down-and-dirty off-road experience that will enthrall any racing fan. The handling is great, the graphics are excellent (look at that mud splash!) and the options to customize your car and edit tracks give *Rally* needed depth. The best racing game to hit the console since *Gran Turismo*.

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 8 · O 8 — **93**



Rally Cross 2
PlayStation
989 Studios

I heard rumblings that *RC2* would be a bit "dumbed down" from the first, but aside from an overall heavier feel to the game (gravity times 2?), this IS *Rally Cross*. They've found the perfect middle ground between awesome physics and really, really fun off-road racing. Throw in axle-bustin' track designs and some nifty reflection-mapping, and I'm lovin' it! The only small nit I can pick is the mediocre music... But the sound effects still crunch home! Time for Reubus to get muddy! (I just lapped El Niño again!)

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 8 · O 8 — **92**













Anything with with the word 'extreme' attached to it bugs the hell out of me. Ever since ESPN started covering extreme sporting events, we have been bombarded by cheesy Gen-X ad campaigns, lame-o hobbies disguised as competitive sports, and obnoxious and annoying grunge-types with over-inflated senses of worth and purpose. When this mish-mosh of recreational activity took on form with the creation of the X Games, things got even worse.

One area overrun by this cancer is the video game industry. First there were catchy little titles like *Skitchin'*, but things began to get out of hand with the introduction of Sony's ***ESPN Extreme Games 1 & 2*** and the flood of snowboarding titles from every company that wants to "Do the Dew." You can imagine my trepidation when EA Sports' new title, *X Games Pro Boarder* showed up on my desk. That's all we needed — another "radical" boarding game where alternative types shred and rip. Then I got to playing it...

"...stellar gameplay... a real find..."

X PRO BOARDER

Surprisingly, *Pro Boarder* is an exceptional title with a level of quality that usually doesn't accompany games of this ilk. What should have been an ESPN title, released under their new interactive division, ended up with EA after a dispute over who had the license for the name. Developed by Radical, *Pro Boarder* features real-life pros, from Shannon Dunn to Terje Haakonsen. There are nine courses, each emphasizing the use of different traits and techniques for maximum effectiveness.

The trick system is easy to get a handle on. Use the X button to get ready to perform a maneuver, then manipulate the d-pad to pull off stunts. For flavor, you can hit the circle and square buttons to grab the side, nose, and tail of your board. Obviously, points are awarded for the difficulty of the trick and the air that you get. Thankfully, the game control is tight, so racing and trick-performing are perfect, allowing beginners the enjoyment of a smooth contest, while experienced players can really work some aerial acrobatics.







The most impressive aspects of *Pro Boarder* are its graphics and sound. Not only is the game running at a high frame rate, there isn't a seam to be seen anywhere on the course. The colors are beautiful and each run has its own ambiance. To accompany your shredding are tunes plucked from the albums of contemporary faves such as *Rancid*, *Foo Fighters*, and *Pennywise*.

The game has one problem, and that lies with the 2-player mode. The screens are split vertically instead of horizontally. This makes it next to impossible to see where you are going during a race. The problem is less of a hindrance on the half-pipe, but still tends to get in the way. Who needs peripheral vision?!

X Games Pro Boarder is a real find. Though maybe not as deep as a *Cool Boarders*, it still has some stellar gameplay and better graphics, which make it my personal fave as I'm shredding Chupacabra Peak (pesky bat-things). *EN*

R REVIEW

PlayStation

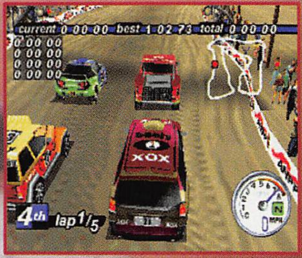
DEVELOPER - RADICAL
PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
Those pesky chupacabra...

Rally Cross 2









This is some fun driving! *Rally Cross 2* is a marvelous sequel and an example of what an off-road game should play like [ahem, *Test Drive: Off Road*].

Aside from the tasty visuals, dual shock action, and immersive sound, *Rally* has some serious muscle under the hood. A great physics model and some blazing speed make this a pulse-pounding racer. The game is more arcade-like than last year's version, but this is a good thing. Too much sim and not enough mud makes this off-roader a little cranky.

There are eight tracks to race and an assortment of cars (including secret ones) to choose from. The ability to edit your own tracks and paint vehicles adds needed depth to the game. The track editor has an easy interface and allows for a fair amount of creativity on your part. Unfortunately the grid you are given to build on can seem a bit restrictive at times.

Rally Cross 2 is a must for fans of racing games — it's the only game I need while I'm tearing up the backwoods of Chupacabra Mountain. Now if they could only get a couple of college coeds to wash the cars after every race... ***EN***

System: PlayStation **# of Plyrs:** 1-2
Developer: Idol Minds **Avail:** Now
Publisher: 989 Studios





NCAA Game Breaker 99











NCAA GameBreaker was easily my favorite football title in last year's bumper crop of pigskin titles, so of course when I got a chance to pop in *GB99*, I was pretty stoked. I mean, if they managed to improve on the minor quirks from last year... this is gonna be the bomb! Right?

Ummm... wrong. They improved on 'em all right, but not in the way I woulda hoped for. It's almost as if all my gripes got tweaked to the maximum, so that they are even more prominent than ever, and it's putting a serious hurt on what I like to call fun.

The main deal here is the AI seems to have no ability to read and react whatsoever. Passing is the biggest problem, as every QB has a serious addiction to spot-passing, and couldn't hit a reciever in stride if the Hiesman depended on it. Without total control, you are totally sacked... the same could be said for blockers, who not only suck it up on the offensive line, but never pick up anything on the run.

That aside, I guess it is a passable effort, as the running game controls well and the presentation is pretty slick, but in the end, this one just falls short of the goal line in comparison to the likes of EA Sport's *NCAA Football*. A rental at best. ***BB***

System: PlayStation **Publisher:** 989 Studios
Developer: 989 Studios **# of Plyrs:** 1-8 **Avail:** Now

VIRTUAL POOL 64

I've said it before, I'll say it again. In order for a pool game to really work, you need to add the RPG element. While we all love a good game of billiards, the experience is lessened when performed on a computer. There's no beer, no smoke-filled room, no chalk, and no stick in your hand. You may be able to emulate the physics onscreen but you can't emulate the feeling.

So why not shift the focus a little? Include a killer pool engine, but make the game an adventure, taking you into backstreet pool halls and Vegas invitationals. *Be* the Hustler. Play for money, upgrade your cue, and make yourself a reputation. Chance upon a pool guru on some windy Chicago night and challenge him to a game; if you win, he gives you his prized stick, if he wins, you're run outta town. Now *that* would be a pool game...

...that wouldn't be *Virtual Pool 64*, however. *Virtual Pool* was originally a PC game that is now trying to land an audience on the console – and it will have a hard time doing so in this state. A brilliant pool sim, *Virtual Pool* has everything a player could want in terms of ball physics, sound and play options, but it's lacking one important ingredient: a reason to play. Sure, there are tournaments and every type of pool contest to pick from, but the drive to continue playing is not there.

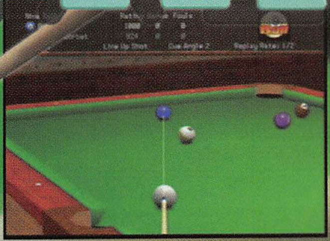
The graphics are sharp (a major feat for an N64 game) and vibrant, and the dynamic camera angles keep the look fresh. Unfortunately, this game is drier than a 00's martini and will turn off just about every N64 gamer.

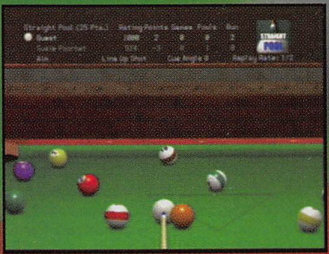
Virtual Pool 64 is clinical perfection, but it's devoid of personality. ***EN***

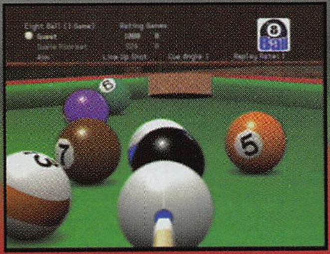
System: N64
Developer: Celeris
Publisher: Crave
of Plyrs: 1-16
Avail: Now

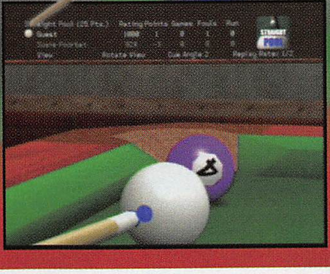


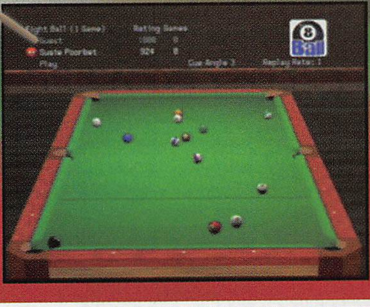


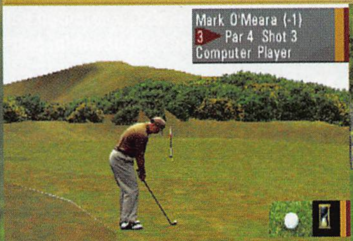


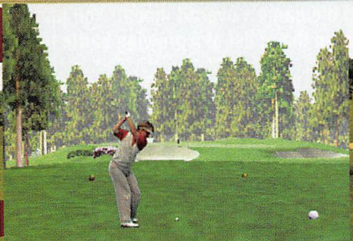


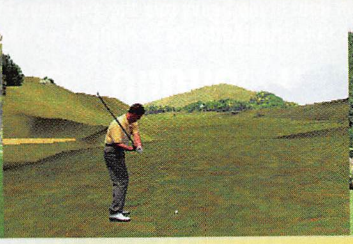














PRO 18
WORLD TOUR GOLF

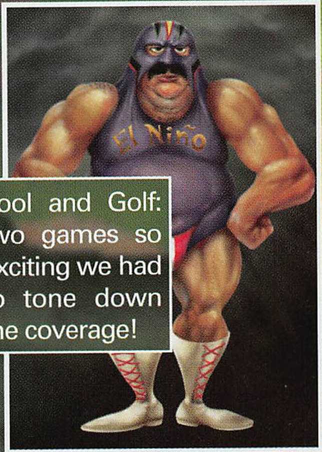
Here we go again... another golf sim. As if there weren't too many already, Psygnosis has decided we need one more. *Pro 18: World Tour Golf* is what this one's called, and if you are able to differentiate it from the other golf sims, you get a gold star.

So what will *Pro 18* offer, other than the swing meter? For starters, you will be able to play against PGA greats (like Ian Woosman, Vijay Singh, and Mark O'Meara), enter tournaments, play skins matches, or just hit the links for a relaxing front nine. All of these thrilling options will be available to you!

Weather will come into play, atmospheric sound effects will bolster realism, and a new aiming and putting mechanism will augment the learning curve. Every golf game needs a commentator and *Pro 18* is no >yawn< exception. Peter Alliss, one of the voices of pro golf, will provide the play-by-play.

I know I sound unenthusiastic, but who wouldn't be? Too many golf games have glutted the market, and none have made the effort, other than *Hot Shots*, to add any creativity to the genre. *Pro 18* will have to make some major strides in order to separate itself from the pack... so far they haven't. ***EN***

System: PlayStation
Developer: Intelligent Games
Publisher: Psygnosis
of Plyrs: 1-4
Avail: February



Pool and Golf: two games so exciting we had to tone down the coverage!

SHOGO 昇剛

mobile armor division






Yeah, OK, so a lot of people might try to tell you that the FPS market is a bit too full when you find yourself running around trying to urge a lost cat out of hiding in a deserted building full of crazy people armed only with a squeaky toy, but believe it or not, luring that damned kitty out in to the open was one of the most satisfying experiences I have had all year on the PC gaming front (no comments, ECM : P).



It may sound nuts, but this experience typified the fusion of humor and action that drove Monolith's innovative 3D shooter, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, and when you combine these aspects with a mech-load of innovation, the oh-so-sexy Lithtech Engine and a slammin' soundtrack, you begin to see why I became the target of many a flying foreign object in GFHQ due to multiple outbursts of utter amazement at the gaming milestone that is *Shogo*.

So what separates this one from the current mob of FPS titles, you ask? There are a ton of little things that help *Shogo* stand out, but I suppose the most prominent aspect of this title would have to be style. Instead of jumping headfirst into temptation and simply shooting to build a better *Quake*, the gang at Monolith decided to take a new world of influence and introduce it to the genre, bringing a welcome change in the way the typical FPS is approached, and the experiment paid off handsomely in the form of a unique gaming experience that represents an interesting look at the future of the first person shooter.

The *Shogo: MAD* universe is sort of a fusion of many classic anime, borrowing heavily from series such as *Macross* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, but it goes much deeper than a mere visual rip-off. Everything in *Shogo*, from the awe-inspiring MCAs to the flood of campy wise-cracks gives the game a distinct feel that, despite its inability to compete in terms of sheer polygon pushing power, rivals the atmosphere of Epic MegaGames' *Unreal*.

This becomes even more prominent in light of the heavy role the plot plays in the game's overall mood. You play the role of Sanjuro Makabe, a talented yet troubled young commander in the United Corporate Authority Security Force who, in the midst of a growing battle for control of the mysterious yet powerful sub-

"...SHOGO: MAD IS A TOP-NOTCH TITLE THAT BREAKS THE FPS MOLD IN SO MANY WAYS..."






stance known only as Kato, discovers that he no longer knows who or what to trust. So, like any good soldier, you hop into the Mobile Combat Armor and dish out your own personal spin on philosophy in the form of some serious mass destruction.

Each portion of the game is filled with countless voice-overs (both from characters you meet on foot and the various people who keep in constant radio contact) and there are numerous cut scenes that utilize the game engine to help push the story. Due to the tone of the game and the way the action sequences are handled, you really get the sense of experiencing this one rather than playing it, which is a welcome change for the genre. The Lithtech engine brings the story to life in such a convincing fashion that I found myself quite flabbergasted on multiple occasions at how well this game manages to reach out and grab you.

From a play mechanics standpoint, *Shogo* does a lot of things right and man-

"...THE MOST PROMINENT ASPECT OF THIS TITLE WOULD HAVE TO BE STYLE."

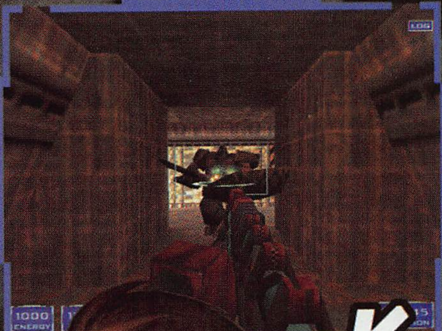
SHOGO
Developer: Monolith Productions
Publisher: Monolith Productions
Format: CD
Difficulty: Adjustable
Number of Players: 1& Multiplayer
Available: Now

ages to bring in some new aspects that add a great deal to the genre. Not only are you treated to several romps 'round town in a huge mech, but the game is full of ground-based sequences where you have to hop out of your mechanical security blanket and hoof it; and the engine manages to shine in both areas. The control is very similar to your standard FPS, but the combat system has added a few new tweaks that help set the game apart from the typical 'ECM run-and-gun' mentality.

Take the Mech scenes. You have to be sure to keep your distance from enemy explosions, as they can wipe you out just as easily as a blast from an enemy laser. Also, you have the advantage of crushing enemy troops underfoot, but with this size and power comes great responsibility (ECM's Note: thank you Stan Lee). Also be careful that you don't step on any vehicles, as exploding cars aren't exactly the best way to maintain you mech — 'dem gas tanks must be real full.

Another good example is the combat system. In both game types, you can score a 'critical hit' on the enemy which, depending on the weapon and the enemy in question, can either blast them up a good bit or completely obliterate them; and this adds a good bit of strategy if you know a particular enemy's weak points.





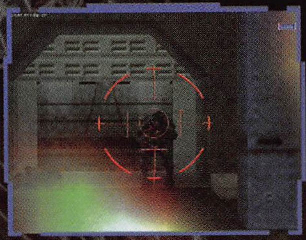












Also, when you score these hits, you regenerate some of your energy, so there is added incentive for scoring a well-placed hit. This adds to gameplay in that it helps tone down the importance of searching for power-ups to stay healthy and keeps the game moving quickly as opposed to turning into one big mexican stand-off. The good news is, this aspect also applies to you to, so you have to be careful not to run into a battle you can't maneuver your way out of, adding a great deal to the game's strategy.

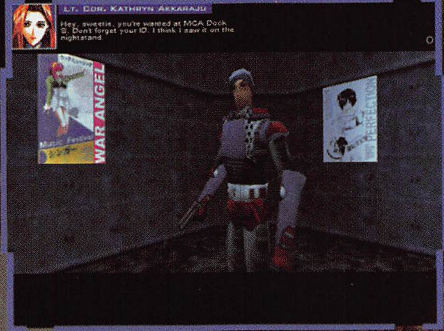
Visually, the game simply owns. Massive explosions fill the screen in MCA mode. Incredible light-sourcing sets an ominous futuristic tone. Animations, such as Sanjuro's slick six gun twirl or the realistic splattering of a freshly bazooka'd body (too funny), are plentiful and impressive. Add to these characteristics the aforementioned ease with which they have captured (and dare I say improved upon) the anime theme and the Lithtech engine manages to present an awe-inspiring set of environments that will really draw you in.

The game's audio is also well done, featuring some great voice-overs, an adrenaline-pumping techno sountrack and speaker blowing (literally... hehe) sound effects that all do a great job of rounding out a top-quality presentation.

Unfortunately, I can't really begin to scratch the surface of how much fun this one really is, but hopefully this review gives you some idea of what to expect. *Shogo: MAD* is a top-notch title that breaks the FPS mold in so many ways, and does it all with a style that will leave you begging for more. If you are a die-hard FPS fan or even if you have had more than enough of the whole corridor shooter scene, *Shogo* brings enough refreshing action to the table to warrant some serious consideration. Now, to find that stupid cat... * SQUEAK-SQUEAK * ***Bubba***

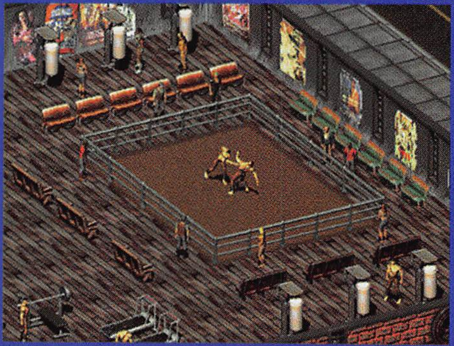




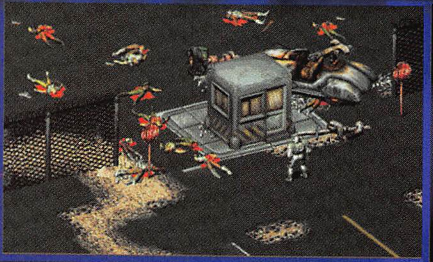


Fallout 2™

A POST NUCLEAR ROLE PLAYING GAME

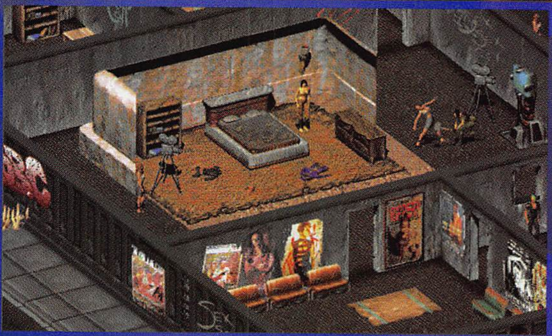




The most fun you'll ever have in the post-apocalyptic future!



The best PC RPG of last year was, without a doubt, *Fallout*. Based on the world first visited in the classic *Wasteland* (a game Electronic Arts published for Interplay), *Fallout* was an old school RPG and a shining example of the American style of the genre. *Fallout 2* manages to one-up its predecessor.

After the Wanderer put a stop to the mutant hordes, life didn't exactly pan out they way he thought it would. What should have been his Salad Days turned into a horrible nightmare when he was exiled by his own people (it seems they didn't like what he became). Forced out, he travelled north to start his own clan, hidden away from the rest of the wasteland by canyons.

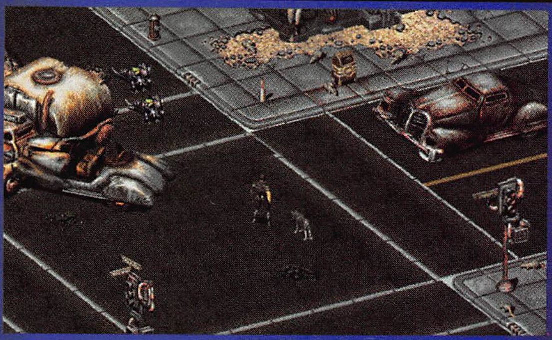


It's been a couple of generations since the Wanderer passed on. He's more legend than man, now- even amongst his own people. The threat of mutants, too, has faded, material for storytellers. The world is faced with another dilemma now and a it's time for another hero to rise to the occasion. That's where you come in...

Every aspect of *Fallout* that you loved can be found in the sequel. The graphics, combat system and easy-to-use interface have remained intact. You'll recognize most of the weapons and items as well as some of the denizens (although they are none too happy to see you!). There have been a couple of graphic enhancements, but not anything profound; and the music and sound effects have been beefed up, giving the atmosphere a little more flavor.




While *Fallout* was near perfect, it did have one annoying aspect: NPC control. Despite the fact that these NPC were supposed to be sentient beings, they seldom acted like them and were hindered by their lack of options. Thankfully, *Fallout 2* has addressed this problem and the resulting NPC control has a major impact on gameplay. For starters, you can now tell your



buddies to stay put while you move on. This allows you the ability to leave them behind while you perform some activities. Even better, you can now access a screen which gives you the option to totally customize their actions. Set fighting intensity (from Coward to Berserk), establish certain parameters (now you can tell them not to "spray" with a gun if there is a chance of hitting you) and tell them when to use a stimpack. Also, you can equip them with armor and view stats like Hit Points and Weight Limit! These NPCs *do* have unique personalities, though, so don't expect to be able to set a warrior's intensity to coward, 'cause he won't do it.

To add to the excitement, the random world encounters have been expanded to include locations such as cave complexes and raider camps. You will also be allowed the option of entering encounters that involve different parties already involved in a skirmish (sit back and wait for them to decimate each other, then move in for the goodies!).

Fallout 2 is exactly what you would want from a sequel. No major changes to the engine or interface allow for instant familiarity, while the story and new features add layers of depth and excitement. *Fallout 2* manages to eclipse the stellar *Might & Magic VI* as the best RPG of 1998.

PC GAMEFAN

FALLOUT 2

Developer: Black Isle Studios
Publisher: Interplay
Format: CD
Difficulty: Adjustable
Number of Players: 1 Player
Available: Now

Customize your NPCs!





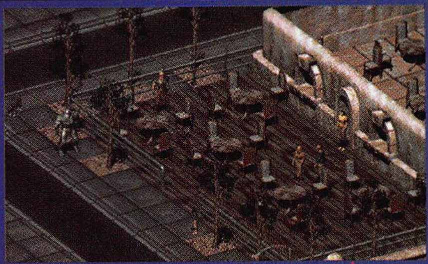




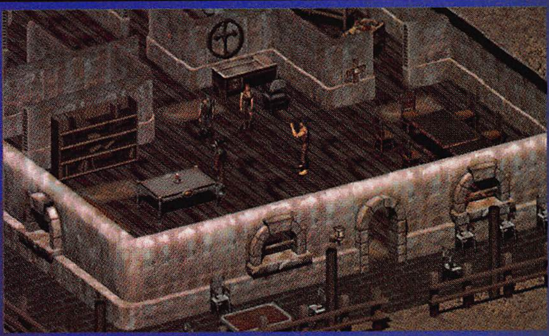
The Judge's FUN CORNER!

R.O.U.S.?!! (Rodents Of Unusual Size)

Movie buffs will notice a good deal of cinematic humor in *Fallout 2*. From an homage to *The Princess Bride*, with the inclusion of Rodents of Unusual Size, to the famous *Star Wars* line of "You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy..." in reference to The Den. A nice addition.

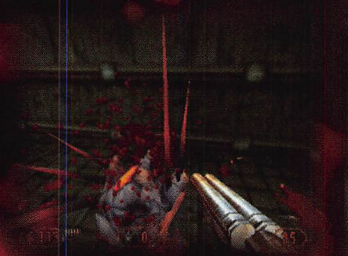






BLOOD 2
Developer: Monolith Productions
Publisher: GT Interactive Software
Format: CD
Difficulty: Adjustable
Number of Players: 1 - 32
Available: Now

blood II THE CHOSEN





It's bad enough when I get the impression someone can read my thoughts... even more annoying is the impression that they are taking said ability and mocking me with it. Such was the case with my experience with Monolith's *Blood 2*.

Less than a week after I whined about how games have really lacked a good challenge lately, along comes a title that really manages to give me a hard time, and I am loviní it! The irony... err... bleeds...

Even more of a shock, however, was the dramatic leap this series has made since we last saw it. Monolith's second effort in this oh-so-gory series is like witnessing the visual jump from Genesis to Dreamcast. Even on our low-end system, *Blood 2* flowed quite well using Monolith's Lithtech engine and the difference is both frightening and sickening to watch... but I mean this in a good way. Copius amounts of plasma plaster the walls with each gib, and the enemy animation can be just plain insane at times (not to mention nasty... this one makes *Resident Evil* look like an episode of *Goosebumps*...). A far cry from the grainy sprites of old.

Amidst all this change, Monolith did not lose sight of what made this series so popular in the first place (aside form the obvious gore factor), and the challenge is back with a



"Copius amounts of plasma plaster the walls with each gib..."



vengeance in *Blood 2*. Enemies fire the second you turn a corner, and pull some wicked evasive maneuvers in the form of ducks, dives, rolls, and more to dodge your boom-stick.

Not that they are all about avoiding you. The bad guys in *B2* are more than willing to come looking for trouble. In addition to the aforementioned "stick-and-move" routine, they use tactics such as group attack formations and a serious game of chase to make sure they stick it to your grill.



What little there was in term of presentation here was pretty good, especially the voice-overs (though we can chalk up one more company on the list of "People That Owe Bruce Campbell Money" front). The story does tend to take a backseat to the action, which could be either a blessing or a curse, depending on your gaming tastes. For my money, I was a bit too busy ramming my assault rifle rounds down peoples' throats to give a rip so I won't stress on it too much...

In the end, *Blood 2* was an above-average attempt at the tried and true *Quake* mold and if you are excited by the thought of splattering the opposition onto nearly every surface in sight, this could very well be the game for you. Hell, the entertainment I got from merely watching the results of my handiwork was almost enough to make me recommend this one. Throw in the challenge and you've got a keeper.






Japan Now!

The Dreamcast is HERE!

The "next level" has finally arrived! Feverishly waiting for the FedEx guy on Friday, November 27 the entire office was abuzz despite the fact that it was technically a holiday at GF HQ (post-turkey day recovery for most of the country). While slurping down copious amounts of coffee and/or Coke (Pepsi for Reubus, of course) we were off-the-wall wired by the time the courier arrived, and with him the package of ultimate, hard-core justice: Sega's Dreamcast.

As we feverishly ripped the meager packaging to pieces several questions raced through our sugar-stoked, caffeine-choked minds: Would all the agonizing anticipation and the nigh interminable wait be worth it? Does Sega finally have a piece of hardware they can be proud of, instead of something that would be better suited to propping a room door open (nightmarish images of Sega CD's and 32X' the world over sentenced to life as paper weights flood the mind- just say 'No!' to capital punishment)? And most importantly, can Sega fans finally hold their heads high once again, confident in the knowledge that Sega is back? Thankfully, with 72 hours of feverish gameplay behind us, the answer to all of the above is a resounding, room-rocking "YES!!!".

Sega's box o' might left us panting and lusting for "what's next?!", after witnessing the spectacle of the ultimate in 3D brawls with, Virtua Fighter 3 tb; the wacky, 60 FPS racing antics of PenPen Trilcelon; the building-destroying, city-torching assault of Godzilla Generations; and finally the eerie, digital comic-esque July- the next generation has arrived with the raw force of a nuclear assault.

Within this mini-issue, you'll find the first hands-on US previews of all the launch titles (it's not fair to review them at this point due to limited playtime), as well as shots of the next wave of games to be featured in the February 'issue' of Dreamcast Dimension (including the be-all, end-all that is Sonic Adventure). After this month look for this section within Japan Now up until the DC's US launch, at which point it will take its place with PlayStation Nation and N64 Play. As for the much-beloved Saturn, it will continue being featured with the rest of the games in Japan Now, and we'll stick with it till Sega of Japan pulls the plug on the "system of the hard-core gamer"- we promise!

Till then, sit back and brace yourselves: the Dream has just begun...

-The GameFan Staff

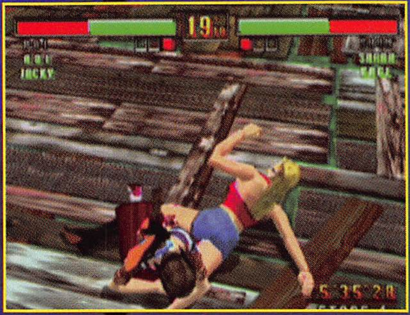
Dreamcast Software Schedule

1-14-99	Sega Rally 2	Racing
	Sengoku Turb	Action RPG
1-21-99	Evolution	RPG
1-??-99	Climax Landers	RPG
2-18-99	Monaco Grand Prix	Racing
2-??-99	Aero Dancing	Flight Simulation
	Get Bass	Fishing Simulation
	Due North	Travel Communication
3-??-99	Blue Stinger	Nonstop Adventure
	Cool Boarders	Sports (Snowboarding)
	Majhong	Table Game
	Puyo Puyon	Action Puzzle
	Buggy Heat	Off-Road Racing
	Cho Hamaru Golf	Sports (Golf)

Virtua Fighter 3tb

•Developer_ Genki/AM2 •Publisher_ Sega Enterprises, LTD.





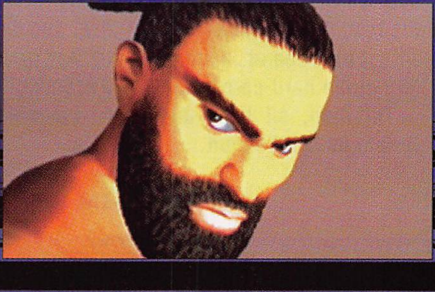

Landing with the force of a runaway comet, Virtua Fighter 3tb has arrived on Sega's Dreamcast. Can Sega's latest foray into the console market contain the raw fury of this Model 3-powered beast, or is it destined to become another tortured soul in the land of ill-fated arcade ports (sharing a cell with PS Samurai Shodown 3, and Saturn House of the Dead, <whimper>). Does Sega's lead DC title have what it takes to pull gamers away from Konami's Metal Gear Solid and Nintendo's Zelda: OOT, or has it condemned this fresh spirit to the infernal realm of 32X and Virtual Boy, twin rulers of the console scrap heap - the horror, the horror! Prepare yourself for a reckoning...

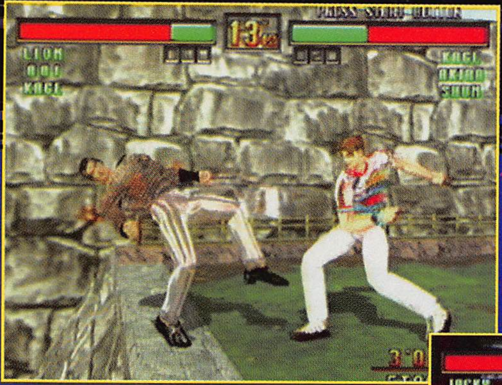
On Becoming a True Believer

Inserting the GD-Disc in the freshly minted DC unit, you can't help but feel that this is old hat. "Who cares?" you muse to yourself. "It's just another console launch, and from Sega at that - what's to get worked up over? It'll probably be something like House of the Dead..." as your stomach lurches violently. Then the 'Sega presents' screen appears...<fast forward about ten minutes> Having just managed to pick yourself up off the floor after witnessing the heart-pounding spectacle of the real-time intro, you savagely pound on the 'Start' button desperate to get a taste of what may prove to be nectar drawn from the well of gaming nirvana. The character select screen comes up, with all combatants in full polygonal glory, just begging to be chosen as the one that has the first match on virgin RAM. Palms sweating and adrenaline on fire, you go with Akira, knowing full well that "no one will be able to stand before the fury of the Stun Palm of Doom." The 'Next Match' screen appears, with Lion destined to be the first miscreant dispatched



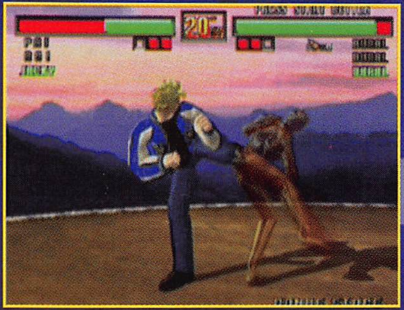

on your way to the final battle against Dural. You drink in the beauty of the first background, noting briefly how quickly the game 'loaded.' Next, your eyes are baptized, as if being opened for the first time, with the searing heat of seamless, hi-res graphics and 60 FPS visuals, striking you a seemingly physical blow... just as Lion begins his own assault. Quickly recovering, you launch a blistering array of attacks; jabbing, thrusting, and throwing until Lion is backed into an inescapable position, all the while noting the achingly smooth animation and the elegance of complete and total control - as if the pad was an extension of your mind. Taking an inkling of a moment to once more admire the graphic spectacle, you block Lion's impotent strikes with expert high and low blocks - then the SPoD is delivered with all the bone-crushing speed and force of a runaway train. Lion goes down... hard. A boyish smile creases your flushed face, as you realize for the first time in your jaded life, that this is truly the start of something special.

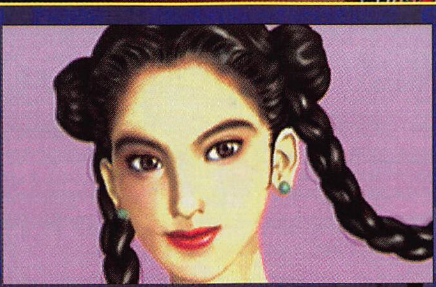






Picasso who?

VF3tb was originally designed to run under the fearsome arcade monster that is Model 3, and many were terrified to think how a home console would ever handle something that powerful and feared that we'd never see a flawless port. Would the subtle beauty of VF3 manage to shine through on Sega's '128-bitter?' I say subtle because it's the little things in VF3tb that 'wowed' in the arcade and are the main things that will shock in the console rev. There were no flashy lighting effects a la Tekken in the Model 3 edition, rather they went with subtle lighting effects like full specularity for the water in Aoi's stage (the white crests on the waves are a good example of this) and plenty of shadow and particle effects on others (sparks on Jacky's stage, dust on Wolf's). Items like accurately modeled clothing (which required massive amounts of computational power) and




blazing, multi-level transparencies on Shun's raft stage ensured that anybody who took the time to study it would be in complete and total awe of AM2's power... not to mention the more obvious items such as blistering motion capture and the staggering amount of polys which were both utter insanity. Truly, though, it was the minor details that added up to a silicon work of art.

In the Dreamcast edition of the "greatest 3D fighter ever" (believe it, Tekken-heads), most of the graphical force of the Model 3 original made it over intact. In fact, after witnessing the intro for the first time (real time, thank you very much) you'll wonder why you ever doubted whether or not Sega would deliver. It's apparent from the first sequence that DC has graphic force to burn, watching Akira totally demolish Wolf on the Great Wall stage @ 60 FPS with fully hi-res backgrounds all moving with zero slowdown and nary a polygon missing from the arcade version. Beautiful hardly does the visuals justice in this game, and seeing a hi-res PS (Bust a Groove, Tobal 2), N64 (Turok 2), or Saturn (VF2) game next to VF3 is like night and day. Actually more like the light of creation versus absolute darkness - the level of detail is so staggeringly superior to other consoles that you'll be gasping for adjectives adequate to describe its sheer beauty (better keep that tank of O2 handy). They even exceed dual-Voodoo 2 PC games in the area of sheer detail; Power VR2 is truly the miracle-worker it was made out to be. As for the minute details that didn't make it, see the accompanying box-out for a quick perusal of what's missing.

DOUBLE TAKE

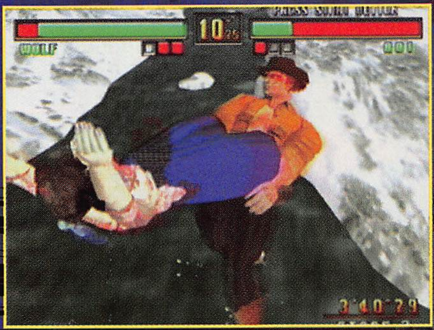
What exactly didn't make the leap from arcade to home? Here's a brief list of the items that didn't make the cut:

- *Shadows drop some polys on inclined or declined terrain.*
- *Joints (knees predominantly) have less polygons.*
- *Some slowdown during 'fly-ins' on Shun and Jeffrey's stages.*
- *Clothing animation cut back (but not eliminated).*
- *Loss of transparencies on Shun's raft stage (down to a single layer).*



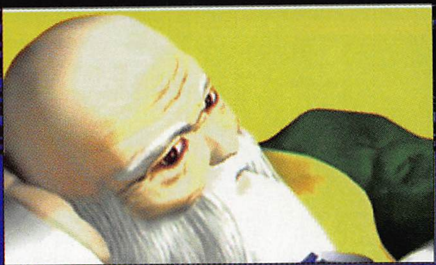
Not too much was lost, and if you've never played the Model 3 edition then you won't notice a thing (obviously). So unless you're among the hyper-anal ("blue shadows, blue shadows!!!") you'll do just fine. There's also the possibility that Sega may 'fix' these things in time for a US debut (cross your fingers).

















Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting



The single most impressive aspect of the arcade version (and the thing that's kept it in the top 3 in Japan since its release) is the absolutely stunning, 'makes other fighting games weep and soil themselves' gameplay. The Virtua Fighter series of games has always been so far ahead of its nearest competition in this department that it's almost impossible to grasp why U.S. gamers never really caught on. Even the art staff here at GF had to admit that after some heavy play, this game is in a league all its own. What exactly is it about the 'play that's so utterly incredible? Well, that's not an easy question to answer. Many would claim (those that didn't play the game for more than an hour at best) that it simply consists of PPK combos and not much else. They also cite that 4 but-







tons isn't enough to accurately deliver a large array and variety of moves (while going on to praise Tekken for its preset 10-hit combos, and four-button gameplay... <argh>). And while it's true that the VF series originally started with a 3-button setup as a concession to the JAMMA standard, it proved to be more than adequate for the task at hand: that is, creating the most raging series of 3D fighters ever. And the belated addition of a 4th button ('evade'), to aid in 3D movement (instead of just giving it to select fighters a la VF2), opens up a whole new dimension of immersion and suspension of disbelief.

And that's the trick: unlike any fighter before it, the Zen-like feeling this game elicits once you get into a groove with the controls is unparalleled. With just a little effort (I know I'm asking a lot) you'll revel in AM2-blessed gameplay with unparalleled aesthetics, and maybe, just maybe, realize that the U.S. has been missing something special all this time; coupling four buttons and one stick are sufficient to accurately replicate hundreds upon hundreds of blazing, 'real-life' martial arts moves. Then again, knowing how little people like admitting they've been mistaken (those that loved Vanilla Ice, for instance) I'm probably









preaching to techno-deafened ears. As a side note, for those that abhor the 'block' button, think on this for a moment: imagine the power at your command that enables you to block at will instead of simply dealing with the artificial blocking of Tekken and Street Fighter (it's just like real fighting... "Viva la revolucion!").



What's in a Name?

Some may be wondering what exactly the "tb" tag stands for. Well, it means 'team battle,' and instead of just one fighter per match, it takes on a pseudo-King of Fighters feel: choose 3 fighters per match, though there's no option to 'tag-in.' Facing off against teams of three offers a great deal more variety in combat. As soon as one of your comrades hits the mat, another steps in to complete the fight... though it's not exactly fun when you're down 3-to-1 and facing the wrong side of a very angry Taka (I wonder if there's a 'right' side to that guy, <ick>).

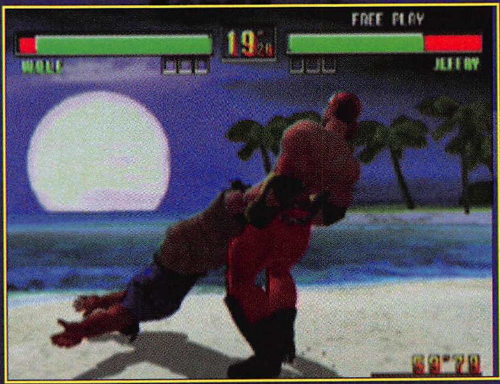






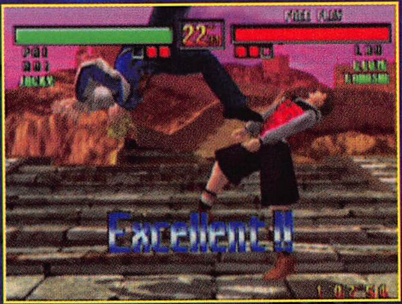


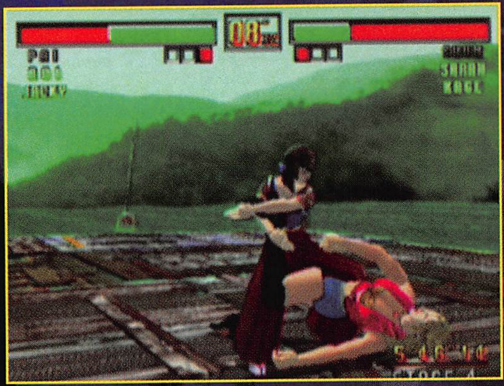




Powered by... GENKI?!

Now that you've had a proper introduction to the game (or is that indoctrination?), let me just mention the most interesting (or odd, depending on your point of view) item about this game: it was developed by - hold onto your hats - Genki. "Genki?!" you exclaim. Yep, Genki. The fine developers behind Deadalus (a.k.a. Robotica) for Saturn, Kileak 1 & 2 for PS, and Multi-Racing Championship for N64. Not exactly a whole lot of experience with, a.) fighting games, b.)Sega games or c.) good games, which makes it all the more shocking that the game turned out as well as it did. Why did AM2 forego the development of this title in favor of farm league (now big league) Genki? Well, the best I can figure (until Genki returns my queries next issue) is that the various AM2 factions were busy with Sheng Mu (Yu Suzuki's 'Virtua Fighter' RPG previously known as Project Berkely) and/or wrapping up Spike Out on Model 3. They sure weren't going to give it to AM3 after their 'reworking' of Daytona on Saturn (oh the pain... the power slides are so broken, <sob>). I'm guessing they went out and hired some fresh skill for this task, as this game is so far beyond anything they've ever handled that it's almost unsettling.



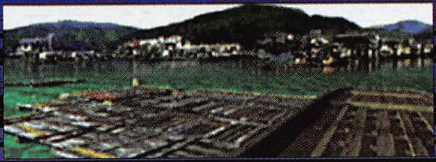










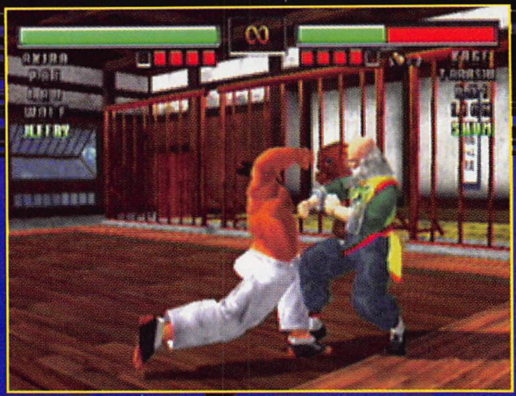










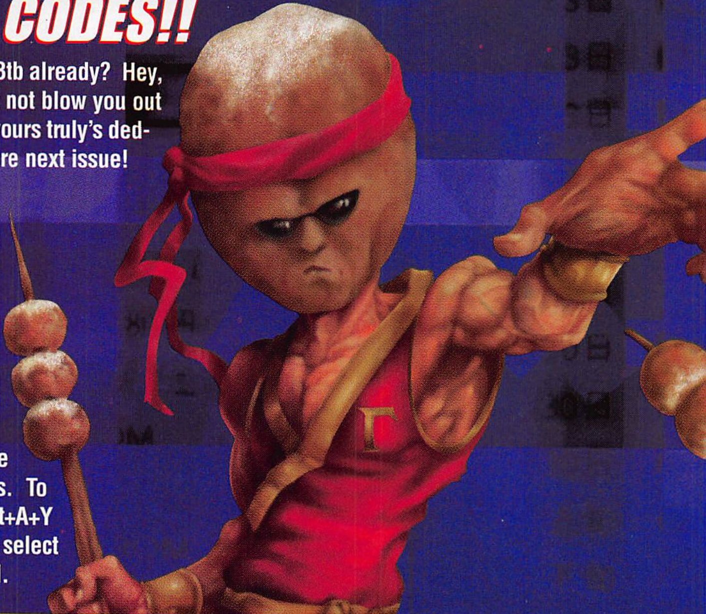


Excellent!



Is there anything more you could ask for in the first power DC game? Well, beyond a slightly more complete translation I certainly can't find much to get worked up over. So rather than sharing a small, untidy shack with SamSho3 and HotD, this game can rightly take its place among the lords of launch titles: Mario 64, Super Mario World, Mario Clash, Tetris, Ridge Racer and Virtua Fighter. Enough positive hyperbole really can't be shouted about VF3tb. The only problem now is whether or not you can steel yourself for the long winter that is sure to ensue in your cold, barren DC-less world. Of course, that can be swiftly remedied with a call to your friendly neighborhood importer, thus joining the rampant legions that have already taken the plunge into the realm of Dream. As far as I can see, the hard-core have only one option (start selling those siblings, folks... you need one). -ECM

First ever Virtua Fighter 3tb CODES!!



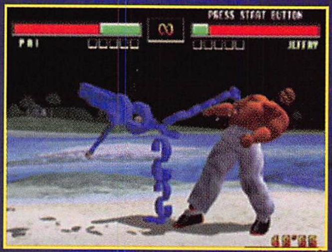
Yeah, I see your eyes poppin out of your sockets. DC codes for Virtua Fighter 3tb already? Hey, we folk here at GameFan don't fool around. While the following codes might not blow you out of the water like the first time you eyed VF3tb on the DC, this is just a taste of yours truly's dedication to finding the finest codes and cheats on future DC titles. Look for more next issue!

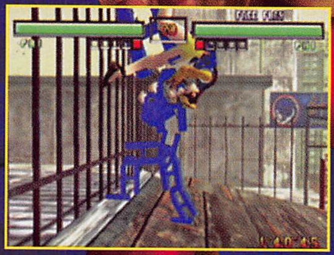


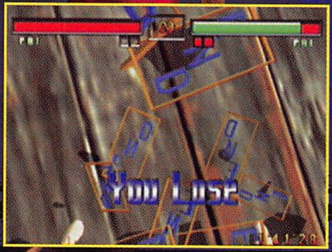


Dural lives!! Well, sort of... Dural (both gold and silver versions) are playable only in Training Mode. So no "super team" of three Durals for you VF peoples. To play silver Dural in Training Mode, at the character select screen, press the Start+A+Y buttons simultaneously. To play gold Dural, press Start+A+X at the character select screen. You man also select them as your opponents in Training Mode as well.









And finally, there's Alphabet Man! Alphabet man doesn't have his own set of moves, but mimics the moves of other fighters. To play Alphabet Man, go into Normal Mode, and at the character select screen, highlight Akira and press Start. Then move the cursor to Lion, and press Start. Finally, move the cursor to Pai, press Start, and select any character. Everytime you get hit, the letters change accordingly. Finally, to play against Alphabet Man, go into Normal Mode, highlight Akira and press Start, highlight Lau and press Start, and highlight Pai and press Start, and select any character.

Godzilla Generations

•Developer_General Entertainment
•Publisher_Sega Enterprises, LTD.



Is there any finer type of entertainment than two rubber-suited monsters battling each other to the death in the setting of 1960 Japan? I think not!! Well, at least back when I was a wee little sapling, spending my weekends watching "Godzilla Vs Any Rubber-Suited Monster From Hell" on Super Saturday Cinema was probably one of the higher points at that time. In any case, Godzilla Generations is out, and with it, you can bulldoze complete cities, spew radioactive death upon the population, and devestate the armies of Japan, all in the name of fun. GG allows you to play either o.g. Godzilla, or new-school Mecha-Godzilla, each with their distinctive moves straight out of the movie (and it's hinted you











can play the US Godzilla and Minilla as well). Speaking of movies, there's also an option to watch every Godzilla movie trailer out there. To top it all off, it takes full advantage of the VMS Godzilla creatures you can create, producing a rendered version of your little monster to do battle!





While the game may be a bit simple and tedious at times, this is a Godzilla fanatics dream come true! Look for more insane coverage of this monstrous title in the near future.

July

•Developer_Fortyfive Co. LTD.
•Publisher_Sega Enterprises, LTD.

With VF3tb, Pen Pen Trilcelon, and Godzilla Generations standing out from the pack little has been seen or known about the 4th launch title. July is one of the lesser known launch titles for the DC, but it won't be overlooked in Japan. The story takes place in July of 1999 where a huge stock market crash causes world depression, but as you play through this digital comic, you'll find a strange, twisted plot that has taken form since the 60's. You learn of the NAX Pharmaceutical company, of the highly intelligent but "sexless" Jean Raven, and how 'he' made the NAX Pharmacy company into a leading military weapons manufacturer. Take the roles of Joshua and Makoto as you discover the strange secret of the R Project. You'll meet interesting characters (as well as some hot ladies...ooh la la), and cut sequences take advantage of the DC's hardware. With lush hand-drawn graphics, unique background ambiance, and futuristic tunes, this game's only flaw is the tremendous amount of Japanese you need to know in order to fully understand the game. With an actual movie due out next year in Japan, stay put for an in-depth look at this game soon.













Pen Pen •Developer_General Entertainment •Publisher_Sega Enterprises, LTD.







With the runaway, 'I can't believe people eat this stuff up' success of games like Mario Kart 64 (a pale, sickly shadow of its 16-bit brother) and Diddy Kong Racing by the wunderkinds at Rare, it didn't take someone of staggering intellect to predict that the Japanese launch of Dreamcast would have at least one wacky, fruit-filled racing game (even Waka's few living brain cells could see that one coming). Thus the creation of Pen Pen Trilcelon from newbie developer General Entertainment (with Genki doing VF3, it seems the rookie squad is in full effect) - they also did the 'honors' on Godzilla Generations. So strap on that wet suit, parka, and warm fuzzy boots - it's Saturday morning cartoon time courtesy of Pen Pen Trilcelon.





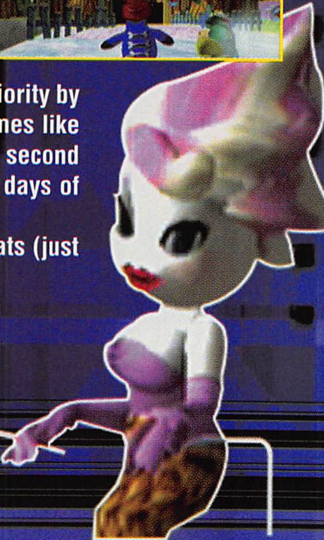






What exactly is a Trilcelon? Like any triathalon it contains three parts: running, swimming, and, uh, stroking. You can probably figure out the former two parts, but the thing that makes Pen Pen a little different is the fact that for most of the race, each Pen Pen (as the characters are interestingly termed) slides along slick surfaces on their bellies, pumping their 'arms' furiously at a constant 'stroke rate' to be the champ of the Trilcelon. The three styles of racing are mostly fun, minus the plodding running sequences where the Pen Pens vie for superiority by throwing themselves at each other in a nod to combat racing games like Road Rash (there's even some of that lovely 'it's better to be in second place' gameplay on occasion, <argh>). The play is solid, but it can become a little tired after a couple days of straight, burn your eyes out, gaming.

One addition to the genre is the ability to earn different outfits that power-up your selected PP. Siren hats (just











like those some of the more 'lucky' readers got as kids, <blech>) freeze other racers and scuba gear allows you to see things better on the swimming sequences for instance. The sheer variety of equipment you can obtain adds a great deal of replayability to an otherwise (relatively) straightforward racer.



The one bonus that PP does have, though, is that it's up to 4-player simultaneous playable. And now you're wondering what happens to the frame rate and detail level in such modes: well, believe it or not, there's almost no hit at all. Chalk it up to really efficient programming or the sheer, superpower of the PVR2 chip. Either way, it's a nice change of pace from the usual 4-player modes seen on other consoles (<cough>, Star Fox 64, <hack>).

As for the visual assault, well, prepare yourself: as with VF3tb this game screams along at an ice-











melting 60 FPS, with eye-searingly vivid color that could melt steel, and resolution so high it's almost blinding (Waka had to be rushed to a nearby hospital after being exposed to too many "pretty pictures," <fueh?>). PPT is probably the best example of what to expect from a 'basic' DC game, with a color-depth so far beyond the ken of mortal consoles that they may as well pack it in; it's gonna be really hard looking at anything else after this spectacle (heck, I know professional cheerleaders that don't look this good - OK, so maybe I don't knowthem, but you get the idea).





Along the same lines as the visuals, the DC's 'fresh off the assembly line' soundboard is hummin' with a string of wacky tunes. A Motor Toon GP feeling will wash over you, though I don't think any of the tunes are quite as good (compositionally) as the theme from Gulliver's House. It sounds a lot like a sugar-coated Saturday morning cartoon (reminds me of the days I'd curl up with a big bowl of Cookie Crisp and turn my brain off for six hours...ah, that was the life).

In summation, what we have here is a good example of what to expect from DC racers (albeit of the fruit variety). Super-fast, brilliantly colorful, and everything, aesthetically speaking that you could ask for. Actually, the best way to accurately describe Pen Pen would be to liken it to Sony's Motor Toon GP (the original): looks fantastic, sounds great, and plays, um, pretty well. Now I'm gonna sit back and wait patiently for Monaco GP (courtesy of Ubi Soft) and Sega Rally 2 (why oh why did you have to delay it?! I don't need network play now!). OK, more like all the patience of a hyper-active ADD-afflicted, 4 yr. old after a Saturday morning binge on Cookie Crisp...woo-hoo!!! - ECM









THE GRAVEYARD

SAMURAI SHODOWN II

The fighting genre, born from the revolutionary *Street Fighter II*, ushered in a golden age of video gaming. Unfortunately, it has taken on a new mold of visual artistry... 3D fighting. Sure, there are some breathtaking 3D fighting games (*Virtua Fighter 3*, *Bloody Roar*, and *Tobal 2* to name a few); but with the sudden interest in polygons, many have forgotten and forsaken the visual glamour of a 2D sprite. Even the king of 2D fighting games, SNK, has gone down the three dimensional route. *Samurai Shodown 64* is an utterly degrading attempt to squeeze the essence out of the legendary fighting series that put SNK on the map. And while the whole line of *Samurai Shodown* games drew crowds and competition in many an arcade, very few owned the Neo Geo home system since you needed to put up your house to buy one. Which is why for this month's Graveyard, it is with great pleasure and a small tear of joy [Ed's note: Why is it always "joy"? Why never "ecstasy" or "delight?" <sigh>] that *GameFan* dug deep into the gravesite to fire up SNK's greatest fighter, *Samurai Shodown II*.







What's that I hear from some of you readers? Shock? Disbelief? Oh, and here's that wave of whining, "What about the *King of Fighters '94-98*?" "What about *World Heroes Jet*?" "What about *Fatal Fury Special*?" Please stop before I have to sick a leashed and overfed-on-twinkies ECM on you. *Fatal Fury* lost its edge a while back; *World Heroes* was too floaty and graphically unpleasant; and while the *King of Fighters* series came close, none of them could attain the level of "everythingness" that *Samurai Shodown II* did. And what about the god of all fighters, Capcom? Bah... the whole line of *Street Fighters* (*Alpha*, *Turbo*, the list goes out the door and into the parking lot), while having a technically better engine and fighting system, couldn't stay on the same level as *SS* in character and attitude. Blasphemy, you say? Getting ready to dig my heart out with a spoon? Good... cuz I ain't done yet.

If the first *Samurai Shodown* received a standing ovation, *Samurai Shodown II* brought the roof down. Featuring nearly all the characters from the first *Samurai Shodown* plus four new ones, *Samurai Shodown II* had a whopping 15 playable characters (not including Kuroko, the dark-masked referee, as a secret character), a huge cast for a fighting game at that time. And in the same tradition as the first, *SS2* had top-notch 2D graphics (perhaps the best in any 2D fighting game), great voice and sound effects, and the "zoom" feature which was first used by the *Art of Fighting* series (ugh... there's one that doesn't need to be remembered).







SNK'S GREATEST FIGHTER!










Incorporated in this grand 2D swordfest are some very well-hidden attacks that you wouldn't find anywhere, unless you went mental on the controls like ECM.

SS2's gameplay was one of the main changes that created a huge sense of superiority over the original. While the first *Samurai Shodown* introduced a "POW" meter which enabled fighters to inflict monstrous amounts of damage, *SS II* improved upon it by adding weaponbreaker specials that could only be executed when your meter was full. If the weaponbreaker special connects, the victim of this eye-blazing attack would become temporarily weaponless and the target of sword-burying-into-the-flesh attacks. Add to this a slightly tweaked combo engine (though admittedly below *Street Fighter* par), additional character movement options, and more super moves, and you'll begin to see why *SS2* takes the SNK crown.

Moreso, if there is "art" in a fighting game, *SS2* screenshots should be printed out and framed for those coffeehouse-dwelling art critics. *SS2* screams extremities in every graphical department, from the explosive flashes of Wan Fu's weaponbreaker special to the simple Zen-like idle animations of Ukyo. There is so much freakin' animation for every character, it makes this dango scratch his powdery head and wonder how long it took them (a bit over a year) to produce such 2D graphic quality. Add to this the quirkiness of hidden Super Deformed transformations, hilarious taunts, and winning poses that only SNK could get away with, and it's very easy to understand why so many hard-core gamers love this game.

If you never heard of *Samurai Shodown II*, a thought I could never even fathom, you owe it to yourself to head to the nearest arcade and find one. While Neo Geo cart machines are relatively cheaper than what they first were ($250 nowadays, instead of the lucrative $600 back then), it's hard to find a *SS2* cart cheap. In any case, if you're a fighting fan and you missed that train to the enlightenment of Cham Cham's purring taunt, Earthquake's farting, or Haohmaru's secret death uppercut attack, it's not too late to witness SNK's finest fighting achievement. And do it soon, before the gaming world replaces the glories of *SS2* with another mediocre 3D slugfest (*Samurai Shodown 64 II*? <shiver>).

Dangohead









Nakoruru's secret attack is done with a diag. d/f, d, diag. d/b, b, f, d, diag. d/f, f + BC buttons. She'll whirl her cape at an enemy thrice while releasing an image of her bird.



Haohmaru's secret attack is the hardest of the four, but the most devastating. Doing five Crescent Moon Slashes in a row, the motion is d/f, b,, d/b, d, d/f, b, d, d/b



Hanzo's secret attack doesn't do any damage, but it makes him totally invisible! The motion is b, f, b, f, b, f, d +BCD. He'll be invisible for about 10 secs or until he's hit.



Galford's secret attack is the exact same motion as Hanzo's (b, f, b, f, b, f, d + BCD) but it is unfortunately not as effective since you can still see Poppy! Still, you'll get a good laugh.





Fight Kuroko, the referee?!? You bet...and he's one hard guy to beat. To fight him, he'll either randomly appear any time after your third opponent, or he'll appear after your 4th, 6,th, 8th, or 10th opponents provided you kill them in the last round with you weapon breaker super!




Kuroko, the ultimate SSII fighter? Pretty much, with an assortment of moves from all the SNK fighters, Kuroko is cheap and way too powerful. Which is why, you should play him!!! You can only play Kuroko in a 2P game where at the character select screen, up, down, left, up, down right + A. Have fun!

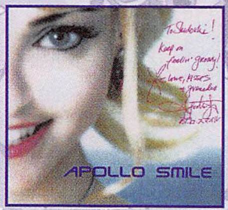


neo AnimeFan

More than just "the anime section"... Anime, Manga, Asian Live-Action, J-pop and all related products.

As you may notice, things are a bit chaotic this issue. I'm scrambling to catch up on everything that I want/need to cover, and come next issue things will be a little more back to normal. In the meantime, you'll notice that I'm trying to add even more new and different things for your enjoyment. I believe an anime section should be more than just a few anime reviews slapped together (even if I do have to stuff it all into six pages), and I hope that you agree. As well, I'm trying to improve the look and feel of *AnimeFan*. So what do you think? Please let me know! And boy I'm thankful to be out of Cali for a while to enjoy a REAL winter.. Whee, snow! - *shidoshi*

Listen to This



Apollo Smile
Love Kisses and Grenades

The look, the attitude, I was expecting fast-paced pop and dance songs. Well ... I was only half right. I don't think you'll be hearing Apollo at any raves anytime soon, but her music is fun and you'll soon find yourself singing along. Where I was really impressed was the second half of her CD, which contains a number of indie-sounding rough cuts and older songs. I really got a kick out of these, especially Trigger Finger. I enjoyed this one. - shidoshi



Bastard!
Best of Bastard!

I haven't seen Bastard! yet, but I thought I'd give the soundtrack a try and see if I could enjoy it without knowing the music already. What I found was a collection of dark, moody, atmospheric tracks that are right at home with a spooky kind of guy such as myself. [laughs] This is a pretty powerful soundtrack, and sounds like it could have come from the latest Hollywood blockbuster. Even if you're not a Bastard! fan, if you like this type of music, you might want to check it out. - shidoshi

Manga-scene: What's New in Print

Two manga anthologies, both going through drastic changes as of late. For the good, or for the worse? I take a look at both this issue, and as always, tell you what I think.

MixxZine

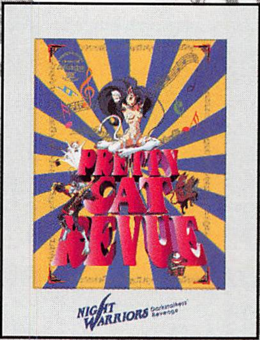
While Viz's changes went more the content route, Mixx's changes are more in how they present their content. While MixxZine has, for a while, included a few extra pages of content, starting with issue 2-1 we suddenly saw a much larger influx of "other stuff." Which brings us to issue 2-2, which shows that MixxZine is starting to go down a path that I personally don't care for. The biggest change is how the manga is presented — manga pages are now reproduced 2-up per page, making them smaller and forcing you to hold the magazine sideways in order to read the titles. This has been done to "bring you WAY MORE manga," and provides for five titles instead of four, now including Mobile Suit Gundam: Blue Destiny. Unfortunately, while this may give you more "pages" per issue, it's a cop-out for a magazine created to feature manga. As well, most of their new features have little to nothing to do with anime, are things readers aren't likely to find interesting, or are simply not done well at all (their game "previews" are such in the loosest sense of the word). With the new manga format, the removal of Sailor Moon, and all of the extra fluff, MixxZine seems to have lost it's focus, which is a REAL shame.





Animerica Extra

Besides the inclusion of Steam Detectives, you might never know that this anthology was, but a month or two ago, Manga Vizion. Gone is the wide variety of titles, which included manga like Samurai Crusader, Ogre Slayer, and Striker, and replacing it is a much more themed and common-grounded line-up: Fushigi Yûgi, X/1999, Video Girl Ai, and Steam Detectives. For those out there who love all types of manga, or those (like me) loving the push that Viz is now giving to shoujo-type manga here in this US, this is very good news. For those who are more into harder-drawn and action-packed manga, the change probably won't do much to endear this new publication to you. Animerica Extra is now more "a lot of what you like" (if you like this variety of manga) instead of "a little of everything" - good or bad depending on your tastes. Personally, I enjoy the change, but realize that it now won't appeal to nearly as wide of a reader base. - shidoshi



Just wanted to bring you a quick update on the world of Chroma-Cels. Two lovely new cels based on Capcom's hit video/anime title Night Warriors will be coming your way soon. These two cels are made more exciting by the fact that both images are unique to the US. The shot of Morrigan has rarely been seen over here in its complete form (it is usually cropped to the right half), and the "Pretty Cat Review" image has never been released here in the United States. You can find Chroma-Cels at EB or any decent anime shop. - shidoshi



AnimeFan rates each anime title that we cover in one of six different areas, with a rating of A+ to F-. Please be aware that the actual letter grade is just as important as any + or - attached to it — a grade of B+ may mean a quality B title, but it is still not as good as an A-.

Guide to Ratings Codes

We'll use this example:
Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Black: The title is available in that format/language. So, for our example, the title is out in both Sub and Dub on VHS.

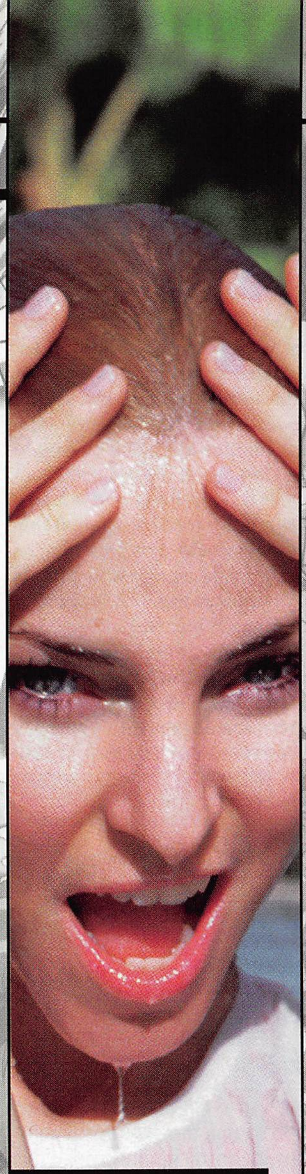
Underlined: The version being reviewed. So, we're reviewing the VHS Sub version.
Greyed: Not available. So, our title isn't out on LD.
Blue: Coming soon/planned. Our example title is planned for release on DVD.

Send comments, letters, artwork to:

AnimeFan
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Or: shidoshi@gamefan.com

the AF-Files : Apollo Smile



Welcome to the very first installment of what I hope will become a regular section in AnimeFan, the AF-Files. What is this section for, you ask? In each edition, we'll take a close and personal look at someone from the industry. They could be a voice actor, an artist, a producer, or a performer — which leads us into our very first AF-Files profile, Apollo Smile. "Apollo who?", I hear some of you asking. For those of you who don't know who she is, I assure you that she is one of the most interesting, and unusual, personalities in the anime scene here in America. She's a singer, songwriter, dancer, voice actress, comic book star, and protector of all that is good and pure — our very own, US born and raised anime/manga idol. So who is this Apollo Smile? What makes her tick? Is this all just an act, or is she really vying for our love and attention as our very own "Live Action Anime Girl"? Is she a great boost to the US side of the anime/manga scene, or is she just an over-excited fan acting goofy? That was my quest: to find out about her beyond what little I knew of her (her song from the Days of Thunder soundtrack, and a small write-up on her published in Animerica). I hesitantly gave her a ring (I get horribly starstruck when talking to people I consider famous), but once I got to talking with her here, I instantly lost all nervousness — she is a wonderfully nice and easy to talk to kind of person. Minutes after you make her introduction, you would think that you've been friends forever. I conducted a small interview with her during our conversation, so without further ado...

AnimeFan: Why does Apollo Smile exist?
Apollo Smile: I created Apollo Smile, the "Live Action Anime Girl," to be a strong influence as a performer in a genre in which I love.

AF: Do you see yourself as the US equivalent of the Japanese idol?
AS: There's way more support from the fans and the industry in Japan for people from anime. They have parties where the staff come out and the fans are there. What I've seen in Japan, they do big releases for their anime for what we do with sci-fi stuff, or the latest release from James Cameron. I think one of the reasons for this is because anime and manga have been in existence for a lot longer in Japan, and the people behind the scenes are supported for far longer than over here. For example, if Disney were to introduce the people behind Snow White, the voice actors, the artists, the creators, how long would you continue to see them for here in the US?



AF: Do you think America needs more idols of its own?
AS: Absolutely. Elaine Barlow (friend of Apollo's and webmaster of Apollo's website), she started Animecca magazine to give US fans more information and a better connection to and with that Japanese and American sides of anime. She especially wanted to give US voice actors a place to connect to the fans, and to give the fans a chance to say what they like and what they don't like. As far as the US voice actors who really care and who want to better the industry, when we get together with the fans and get to talk about the quality and current situation of the dubbed market, it's a wonderful thing.

AF: What got you into anime?
AS: American television when I was small, watching things like Astro Boy, Starblazers, sometimes even some Speed Racer. Even back then, I could tell the difference between those shows and typical American cartoons, and thought they were really cool. Then, of course, I saw Akira, and it changed my world. <laughs> Later on, I hooked up with Douglas (her husband), who was a big anime fan, and one of the first things he turned me on to was Iria — I was in love from the first time I saw her. Ever since then, I've been in love and passionate and tried to support the industry in the US, and any American dubs that are done with quality.

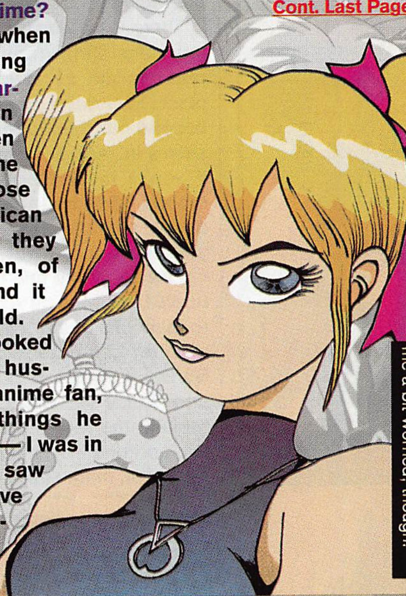
AF: What would you like to do in the future in regards to the industry?
AS: There's a huge giant long list of things that I want to do in the sci-fi industry alone, which I think connects well with anime. Our comic is coming out in three weeks; I'd love to see an anime spin-off based on the story and characters. I'd love to be able to cast the voice actors, and do myself in both the English and Japanese versions. I'd also love to do a live-action version of Apollo.

AF: With big giant robots somewhere in there?
AS: Of course! Video games would be cool too. Multimedia entertainment is huge — the technology is growing faster and faster, with zillions of crossovers, and anime fans aren't strictly anime fans any longer — they like Hong Kong live action films, they buy toys and action figures, they play video games. All those kinds of things go together very well, I think.

AF: Not sure if you've heard about this already, but Antarctic Press is currently making deals to start producing US-made anime toys. Perhaps little Apollo Smile action figures?
AS: Absolutely! <laughs>

AF: If you had to pick one anime character to live the life of, who would you be?
AS: Iria.

Cont. Last Page >>



Kawaii, ne? Her look makes me a bit worried, though.

Apollo Smile

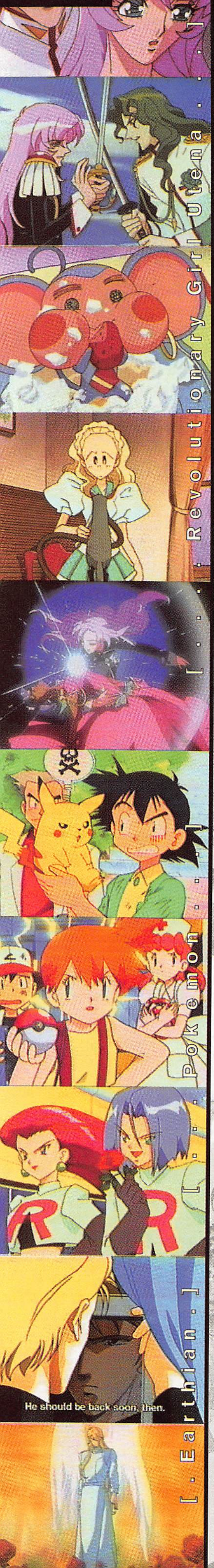
Fav Anime:
Iria, DragonBall, Neon Genesis Evangelion

Voice Work:
Karin - Gowcaizer
Tracy - Toshinden
Incidentals - Iria

How to Contact:
web:
http://apolloties.org
e-mail:
smilehq@aol.com
postal:
Team Smile HQ
1040 First Avenue
Suite 348
New York, NY 10022



Apollo showing her skills in a game of Tekken 3



AF Reviews

What's playing in anime this month

Rev Girl Utena: Volume 1

AF's Best of the Issue

Shoujo • Software Sculptors • 13+
97 min • TV • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Revolutionary Girl Utena was one of those titles that I knew I had to see eventually. It was one of the new crop of "big" titles (along with others like Nadesico and Fushigi Yugi) that were on the lips of many fans and were preparing to hit our shores. And besides, I was horribly curious after seeing the shots of the two girls clinging to one another in every issue of Newtype for like a year running. How do I sum up this series in a quick little sound bite? Not well, but I'll try. Utena, who is now living her life wanting to be a "prince" (which includes wearing a boy's school uniform), gets herself into a duel with the Student Council (a strange group of student who run aspects of her school) over the honor of her good friend Wakaba. She wins her duel, and by doing so, gets herself involved in a situation far larger than she could imagine. By being the winner, she is now "engaged" to Anthy, the Rose Bride. Utena finds herself getting to know her new friend Anthy, and being forced to defend her from the Student Council who want her back.

Wow. I mean, I almost don't know what to say. For most anime fans, a title comes along every now and then that really grabs you and refuses to let go. Not since I discovered Tenchi Muyo oh so many years ago have I been so in love with a series. Utena's quality in every area is simply astonishing, the ease at which it puts to shame most other anime releases nothing less than shocking. You've got an wonderful cast of characters oozing personality, color, character design, and animation that stands out from a sea of drab and garishly drawn anime, haunting music, and a storyline that draws you in from the very start. Another reason to love RGU is that it's ... odd, a very good quality in my book. There are a lot of things when watching that just make NO sense to you, and some of the situations and scenes are rather bizarre. An example of RGU's "strangeness" is one of it's most interesting aspects: it's a very "sensual" anime, while not being overly sexual. The relationship between Utena and Anthy, the "atmosphere" between Touga and his sister Nanami, Wakaba's insistence on calling Utena her "boyfriend" — all things that give RGU a unique personality, though there may be some people who just won't understand or appreciate these qualities.

There is no way that I can recommend Revolutionary Girl Utena enough. This series reminds me of why anime exist in the first place: to create a world of fantasy and splendor beyond our mundane world for us to lose ourselves in. And boy, what a world Utena lives in. If you're the kind of person who loves anime with blood and demons and gets bored at the first sign of a decent plot and characters, RGU probably won't be for you. But, if you've got any bit of sense, and you're looking for an anime title that is quality all the way, snatch up RGU as soon as you can. I'm hard pressed not only to think of a better title released in the US this year, but a better title released in the US at any recent point. Software Sculptors is releasing the first 13 episodes, and if they sell well (*prays*), they have the rights to release the rest of the 39-episode series.

Oh, and one last thing ... Utena, DVD, early next year, mark your calendar. - shidoshi

A+

Earthian: Beginning of the End

Shoujo • OAV • Anime Works • 13+
45 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Whoo ... thank goodness for info sheets, or I would have been a bit lost on this one. [grin] On the planet "Eden," a race of angels has existed for five million years, carefully watching over the Earth. Their reason for concern is us humans, for if the evil inside out outweigh the good by too great a difference, the end of the world will fall upon us. So, in order to combat this threat, some of these angels come to live on Earth and help defend us from evil intent. Earthian centers around two of these angelic investigators, Chihaya and Kagetsuya. While Kagetsuya seems to be the pillar of righteousness, Chihaya is played with troubling visions, and seeks answer to who he is and why his hair and wings are black like the lucifers (dark angels) that roam the Earth. As I said, I was a little lost on this one, as the first volume tells its story by giving us hints on what is going on, but referring to a far bigger picture while making little of it clear (I felt like I had jumped into the X-files after missing a season or two). If you don't mind getting a bit lost, it's a cool little show, and will no doubt built into a fascinating story about angels, darkness, and doom (because hey, angels, darkness, and doom are always interesting). I promise that you'll see more coverage of Earthian in AnimeFan for the remainder of the series, so that I can give you a better review once I've seen it all. If you like X/1999, shoujo, or ethereal anime, check it out. - shidoshi

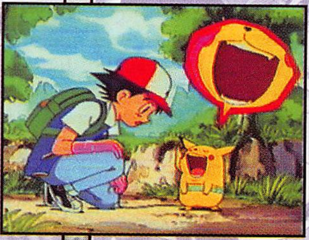


B

Pokemon: I Choose You! Pikachu!

Childrens • TV (3 eps) • Viz Video • All Ages
75 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Pokemon: admit it or not, I'm willing to bet that you've heard of it, be it due to its popularity in Japan, the slight problems that one infamous episode caused, or the gigantic push the series is now getting here in the US. Maybe your local television stations don't carry Pokemon, or maybe you just love the series enough to want a collection — either case, Viz Video and Pioneer are teaming up to bring the US release home on video (and soon DVD). Pokemon: I Choose You! Pikachu! is the first volume of the series, and introduces us to the story and its characters. There's Ash, the typical "pure of heart, average boy" who longs to be the most famous Pokemon trainer in all the land. There is Pikachu, the "leftover" Pokemon that Ash gets who isn't exactly the easiest creature to get along with. There's Misty, the bubbly, very spunky girl who wants nothing more than to have Ash buy her a new bicycle. And where would we be without the wonderfully incompetent evil baddies, played for us by Team Rocket — Jessie, James, and Meowth — who are out to, among other things, "denounce the evils of truth and love." [grin] Pokemon is a fun little series, and if not taken to seriously, can probably be enjoyed by almost anyone (unless you fear cute children's television, like Sailor Moon or Teletubbies). The cast of characters gel well together, and after expecting to be annoyed by Pikachu, I actually became quite fond of him. The dub is your typical "anime series on US TV" fare, which means it ranges from okay to tolerable to occasionally annoying. Oh, and one last thing - I want me one of them Pikachus. - shidoshi



B-

Question: Answer on last page

Pokemon is not the original Japanese name of this outrageously popular Nintendo series, yet Pokemon is NOT a US-created name. Where did the name "Pokemon" actually come from?

Kiki's Delivery Service

Family • Movie • Buena Vista • 103 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

The wait is over, and Disney's first US release of one of Hayao Miyazaki's beloved features has come. I had mixed emotions when I first heard that Disney had picked up the rights to Miyazaki's classics, but as soon as I heard that a subtitled version of Kiki would also be released subtitled, I couldn't believe my ears. I rushed out to get myself a copy, and after having a fansub version for so many years, seeing Kiki in non-generational quality simply made my day. Disney did, I must point out, get a little liberal with the sub script, but it's not nearly as changed as the dub, and a small price to pay for getting the release at all. I see only one problem with Disney releasing Kiki — it so puts to shame everything that Disney has ever released that it makes them sort of look bad. [hehe] If I wasn't giving Utena the "Best of the Issue" award due to it being the newer, "up and coming" series, Kiki would without doubt have taken that honor. Having Kiki not only released in the US, but also in a widescreen, subtitled format is just so wonderful that even I must give Disney credit. The only thing that could be better is if the rumor of Kiki being released over here on DVD comes true — I can't even begin to comprehend how wonderful that would be. I know this hasn't been much of a review, but a review is pointless because there is just no question that you should own Kiki. Absolutely, positively run out and purchase your own copy of Kiki, and help support the release of Studio Ghibli's wonderful movies in the US (and help support this "special" edition so that Disney releases future titles in both sub and dub as well). - shidoshi



A+

Tekken: The Motion Picture

Action • Movie • ADV Films • 15+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Arg... not only must I suffer through another fighting game-based anime title, but one based on my least-favorite fighting game. But hey ... what's this? Tekken: The Motion Picture is actually good! Thankfully, it does a lot of things right: the biggest plus is that it doesn't struggle to fit EVERY character from the game in. Tekken starts off with us going along with Jun and Lei, as they are sent to investigate the Mishima corporation via the secret fighting tournament that the company's owner, Heihachi, is throwing for the toughest fighters around. Kazuya, Heihachi's estranged son, decides to show up for the tournament as well, to seek revenge against his father, and we basically follow these three throughout the movie. Sure, some of the other characters show up (gotta love how Anna makes her entrance), but to be honest half the cast isn't shown except in a passing shot at the end. While some may complain about this fact, I think this idea works much better for a storyline than trying to fit everyone in somewhere. Speaking of storyline, Tekken's is a simple one — fighting competition, revenge — and thankfully, it tells it well and never tries to be more than it is. Throw in video quality that is nothing short of stunning (this is VHS? I can't wait to see the DVD), and you've got an anime incarnation that all Tekken fans can be proud of. There is one big downside, and it's the reason Tekken isn't an A-title: clocking in at 60 minutes forces the movie to rush instead of allowing it to dramatically build. It does rather well for its scant hour, but you get the feeling that the creators wanted to do more with the movie, because the quality groundwork is certainly there. BTW, some parts of the movie are hugely funny, totally un-intentionally (which is good or bad depending on how you look at it — I got a kick out of it). In the end, the "fighting game inspired" genre of anime gets another title it can be proud of. - shidoshi

B+



Who is Anime Village?

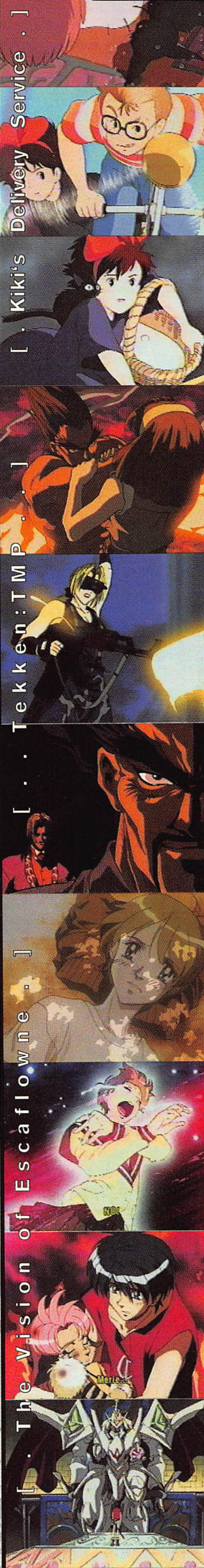
Anime Village is the new US anime division of Japanese giant Bandai. They decided that the only way to make sure that their anime was released right in the US was to do it themselves, so they have. They recently opened up shop with some rather hi-profile titles: The Vision of Escaflowne, Clamp School, Saber Marionette J, and Gundam (I, II, III, 0080, and 0083), and rumors are now going around that they may soon be yet another company to join the DVD movement. The downside? For some reason, Anime Village has decided that, for the time being, they are only going to offer their titles through their website. No big deal for those with internet access; they're missing out on a lot of sales from people retail shelf space. To learn more, visit:
www.animevillage.com

The Vision of Escaflowne

Adventure • TV (4 eps) • Anime Village • 13+
98 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

I have decided that this is the wrong issue to have started my "Best of the Issue" award, because there are so many titles that deserve it. [sob] The Vision of Escaflowne opens with us getting a look into the life of Hitomi Kanzaki: she runs track, she reads tarot cards, and she has feelings for the star of the track team, Amano. Hitomi is crushed to find out that Amano is moving away, so she builds her courage and puts him to a challenge: if she can beat her previous 13-second limit, he will give Hitomi her first kiss. But her kiss isn't meant to be — while running, a young boy who has been haunting her dreams suddenly appears before her. Before sense can be made of the situation, a huge dragon appears as well, and a fierce battle ensues. The boy, Van, kills the dragon, and removes a strange jewel from its body. The dragon's jewel, and Hitomi's special pendant seem drawn together, and in a flash of energy, Hitomi and Van transport back to his homeworld. Hitomi finds herself in this strange new world, the Earth looming above her in the sky, and the land in the midst of a fierce war for the legendary robotic armor Escaflowne. Hitomi must deal with her new surroundings, the visions of destruction she keeps having, and try to figure out how to simply get home. That, actually, is one of the things I found a bit spooky about Escaflowne: how must it feel to be on a strange planet, to see the Earth above you, but have NO way to get back there? Utter frustration. Er, anyhow, I'm really sounding like a broken record this issue, but once again, this is a fantastic series that you really need to check out. If you're already a fan, you can finally get a quality subbed copy, and if you've never seen it, this is going to be one of those titles you REALLY can't miss. High quality animation for a TV series, a powerful soundtrack, enjoyable character designs, a fantastical storyline, and hey, giant robots blowing stuff up. If you long for another engrossing, epic series now that Evangelion is over and done, Escaflowne is all the fix you need. - shidoshi

A





Golgo 13: Queen Bee

Action/Thriller • OVA • Urban Vision• 18+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Duke Togo — aka Golgo 13 — ah, the memories. Falling in love with the classic NES game (why no version of Golgo above 8-bit has yet to arrive is BEYOND me, especially after seeing Metal Gear Solid), collecting the few English-translated Golgo graphic novels that came out — I've been a Golgo 13 fan for many a year now. Fast forward quite a few years, and we come to Golgo 13: Queen Bee, a brand new (as in, this year) Golgo 13 story for all of his fans to enjoy. It starts with a simple mission: kill "Queen Bee," a South American liberation army commando, before she can kill a presidential candidate. But, what kind of story would it be if it were that simple? Queen Bee's secret motives are far deeper than first thought, the candidate is a puppet for a larger scheme, and Duke must decide which is more important: his mission or personal vengeance. Remember how I said that Cobra was the man? Yeah, well, while I call him the man, HE calls Duke Togo the man. Unlike wimps like James Bond, Duke's current love interest can get gunned down and he shrugs it off like it was nothing — now THAT's a badass. If you'll allow me to vent a few personal gripes, while I didn't take off points for these, I thought Duke's voice was a bit too froggy, and I never liked the "South American Jungle" Golgo 13 stories. [heh] Touchy Shidoshi aside, the only things that I thought really held Queen Bee back was that it seemed to drag every now and then, and Duke tended to be upstaged by Sonja (Queen Bee) too much for my liking. Okay, so, put those aside, and you have an enjoyable dramatic thriller with animation, music, and bullet-spraying shootouts done in traditional Golgo 13 style (which, of course, also means that this one certainly isn't for the kids). When was the last really good thriller like Queen Bee released, and why did it take so long for us to see Duke again? Bah, no matter — Duke is back to shoot the men and seduce the women, and there's no rust to be seen on his weapon. - shidoshi

B+





Irresponsible Captain Tylor

Action/Comedy • TV (4 eps) • Right Stuf Inc. • 13+
100 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

The Irresponsible Captain Tylor — boy, what a title it is. If you've never heard of the series, ICT tells the tale of one Justy Ueki Tylor — one of the biggest idiots in the entire universe. But Tylor's charm is that he's a lovable idiot, and as he stumbles through his life, you'll be laughing at his antics and cheering for his victories. You see, Tylor isn't really going anywhere, until one day, while just slightly tipsy, he falls in love with a girl on an advertisement for the United Planets Space Force. He becomes determined to get a career in the military, dreaming of an easy desk life and a good pension when he retires. What he finds, however, is that by a large amount of chances of luck, he quickly rises through the UPSF to pilot his very own star cruiser, the Soyokaze! A broken-down joke of a starcruiser with a rag-tag team, that is, but Tylor's too busy playing captain to notice. He and his crew race out into space, getting right in the middle of the ongoing war between humans and the Raalgon. Either Tylor and his ship will die a quick and painful death, or by some slim chance, his luck will take him so far as being the hero of all mankind! Tylor stumbles through life, with an Inspector Gadget-esque ability to somehow do the right thing and come out as the hero in every situation (though he isn't always smart enough to know that he's pulled off a miracle and take credit for it). Yup, it's yet ANOTHER good anime TV series this month — what do you know. ICT is wonderful classic anime, containing great animation, with a diverse and interesting cast of characters that aren't your standard one-dimensional fair. ICT will be released as eight volumes, and currently it's only available in subtitled format (with a dub coming soon if it's not already out). Each volume is packed with fun and frivolity, and will leave you wanting more. - shidoshi

B+

AF DVD Connection

I had planned on bringing you a complete list of anime DVD titles, both what's coming and what's already out, but obviously they didn't quite fit. ^_^ If you look over the list below, you'll notice a few things - ADV Films IS giving the format a test run come January, Pioneer is GREATLY stepping up their DVD support, and CPM continues to release oodles of titles. How is DVD doing? Well, let's just say that DVD is doing far better than LD is doing or ever did for many titles — a very positive sign at such an early point in DVD's lifespan. DVD is here to stay, make no mistake, and those companies not currently releasing titles on DVD soon will be — the number are just getting too good not to.

Bastard!	Q1 '99	Macross II: The Movie	Dec '98
Battle Athletes - Vol 1	Dec 12	MD Geist I & II	Dec 31
Battle Athletes - Vol 2	Jan 12	Night Warriors 2	Dec '98
Battle Athletes - Vol 3	Feb '99	Pokemon - Vol. 1	Dec 15
Battle Angel Alita	Jan '99	Pokemon - Vol. 2	Mar '99
Bubblegum Crisis	Nov 27	Pokemon - Vol. 3	Q2 '99
Cybernetic Guardian	Q2 1999	Project A-Ko	Q1 '99
Dark Side Blued	Q1 1999	Record of Lodoss War	Q1 1999
Demon City Shinjuku	Dec 1	Space Adv Cobra	Dec 31
Fatal Fury Movie	Jan 26	Tekken	Jan 26
Fist of the Northstar	Nov 27	Tenchi In Tokyo Vol 1	Q1 '99
Fushigi Yugi Vol. 1	Q1 1999	Rev Girl Utena	May '99
Grappler Baki	Dec 1	Venus Wars	Dec '99
Legend of Arislan	Feb '99	Volt. Fighter Gow.	Dec 31
Psycho Judge	Mar '99	Wings of Honneamise	Dec 31
Lupin III: M of Mano	Dec '98	Wraith of the Ninja	April '99

Ranma 1/2 The Movie 1

How's it fare?: Okay. The movie is older, and the film quality isn't superb. It still more than likely looks better than your VHS copy, and will keep looking good no matter how many times you watch it.
Recommend?: Consider



Green Legend Ran

How's it fare?: Not too bad. The original quality was good sometimes, bad sometimes, and DVD helps make the good better and the bad a bit more tolerable — the off-scenes ARE noticeable, though.
Recommend?: Certainly



Ninja Scroll

How's it fare?: Pretty good, but not as good as it should have, and no widescreen is a shame. Might not talk you out of your LD, but if you only have the VHS, this is probably your best bet.
Recommend?: Consider





You know... the news.

AF's News Service

Special Contest! The "Name the Anime Challenge"

To help usher in the new look of AnimeFan, I'm having a little contest for all of AF's loyal readers. It's simple — just identify all 15 anime titles that are featured in the background of AF's pages (the picture is the same on every page), and if you get them all correct, your name will go in a drawing for a cool anime prize! See if you can figure all 15 out, and check back next issue for full details.

• News Quickies

Yeah, I know ... small news section this issue. But there hasn't been any big news recently, so hey. I will tell you that Right Stuf has the rights to the IC Tylor OAVs, Manga will be giving us the final volume of Giant Robo on December 15th, the A-ko toy will come out way in April, and, well, there you go.

• Answer

Pokemon is the Japanese nickname for Pocket Monster. In Japan, people often give nicknames, or create totally new words, by using the first parts of multiple words. For example, we have the nickname TokiMemo (Tokimeki Memorial) or the often-used word Cosplay (Costume Play). Now you know!

Apollo Smile Cont.

AF: Would you like to continue doing voice acting? Any specific characters that you would like to be?

Absolutely want to continue, feel very honored and flattered to be part of playing a character in an anime series. I haven't done much, but would love to continue on. Knowing that it's coming to the US to be shown on television, it would be cool to do Pokemon. WB and Fox are doing some really cool non-anime cartoon project for television: I would be fun to do voices for any good series, anime or US series. Would LOVE to play Iria, if Central Park Media ever decided to re-dub it. <laughs> I'd also like to be Yohko in Devil Hunter Yohko, but Amanda Winn Lee is a total starlet, she's wonderful in the part - would still love to play her, though.

AF: You've said that you are a big video gamer - what are your favorite games?

<grills me about my favorite video games, and who I play in Bust a Groove [Kitty-N, btw], before she'll answer>

AS: PlayStation wise, my favs are Tekken 3, Bust a Groove, I play as Shorty and Heat, and Shorty has that kick-ass theme song, which I'm determined to learn. Resident Evil 2, have finished it with Clair but not Leon, Point Blank, FFVII, but haven't finished it yet. On the N64, Mario Kart 64, Goldeneye, SanFran Rush, Duke, Diddy Kong Racing, I'm really into the multi-player aspects. Me and my team vid for endless hours at meeting. After sitting there and talking business for what seems like forever, we throw everything aside, and sit down and vid to relax. Uhm, SuperNES... Street Fighter 2, play as Chun Li, she rocks, and Bomberman, which is just insane. On the Saturn, Last Bronx, I LOVE Lisa, she uses Kali sticks, which I train with, VF2 with Pai, and House of the Dead. I think it's important that girls get into video games.

AF: There's been a lot of talk lately about the need for more "female" games, in order to try to get more girls playing video games. Do you agree with that? Do you think we need more games about Barbie, going shopping at malls, things like that?

AS: Excuse me while I throw up. No, it's like, there are as many different types of girls as there are boys. I don't know - those types of girls are out there, if games are made that way, that's for them, but I don't think there are necessarily girl games and boy games. Granted, I vid with guys, but I have more guy friends, and there have always been more guys into vid. I would NEVER play "girl" games.

AF: Any message for the fans out there?

AS: I always want to thank my fans for their enormous and incredible support. Stay united, and feel groovy.

And thus, my interview with Apollo came to a close. So what do I think of her? To be honest, after talking with Apollo, one can't help but love her - she's a wonderful and interesting person to talk to, and she does what she does because of her love for the industry and her desire to see it flourish and grow in the US. Next issue, I'll hopefully be taking a look at her self-published manga series. AF will continue to bring you news from Apollo, as well as dates and locations so that you can meet her for yourself (too bad Omaha has no good anime cons <sob>). The best ways to get yourself up to date with Apollo, her career, her appearance schedule, and her future are to either check out her website, send her an e-mail, or write to her at Team Smile's Fanclub address.

- shidoshi

Next Issue: Shidoshi sits down with miss US Utena herself, Rachel Lillis, for an AF-Files interview. As well, look forward to a review of US Manga Corp's new title Birdy the Mighty, a graphic novel round-up, and some new soundtracks from Viz.

AF's Generically Titled Letters Section

Disney/Ghibli Deal

As much as I loathe what Disney plans to do with Miyazaki's brilliant works, the fact that they are doing ONE particular thing to them makes me happy; Disney was the ONLY American distributor that agreed NOT to censor or cut anything. Kiki's Delivery Service wouldn't really gain anything from this policy, but Nausicaa and The Princess Mononoke have some damn grisly parts. Still, I'd have to agree with the points you've made in Vol 6 Ish 4's AnimeFan. Namely, the point about releasing ONLY a dub (with the exception for the DVD or LD, if ones should be made). Also, my unfathomably evil trigger finger goes ballistic at the thought that Disney will treat these works like their standard, musical flicks; ie. emphasize the glitz, the animation, the movie-star voice line up and the usual Disney stuff that induces nausea. Perhaps we should all bombard Disney with letters telling them to present Miyazaki's works (at THE VERY LEAST Mononoke Hime) as works to be enjoyed mainly by people who have an understanding of worldly wisdom and have a heart. Of course, in America, that would apply to a very small demographic which wouldn't rake in the millions Disney keeps trying to relish in.

RukesRiese

Well, since I last spoke about this topic, the release of Kiki came along, and I must now say that I've rather changed my tune somewhat. Disney actually came through and released an awesome subtitled, widescreen "collection's edition" of Kiki, and while the subtitle job could use a bit of work, I'm very impressed with the job they did end up doing. All I can hope for now is the rumor that Disney will release Miyazaki's titles on DVD, and I'll be an extremely happy man. If Disney continues releasing "truer" subbed versions along with the "more Americanized" dub versions, I'll have to swallow my pride and admit that Disney isn't such a bad company after all.

Hooray for Shoujo!!!

I want to thank you for the plug of Keiko Nishi's Love Song. She has such deep and emotional stories, no? As does almost all shoujo manga. I have been an ardent fan of shoujo manga and anime ever since I saw Moto Hagio's They Were 11. And since travelling to Japan and seeing the many works of CLAMP (who are now my favorite manga authors/artists) my fanaticism has only increased 100-fold. I would like to ask one favor. Could you review Please Save My Earth? It is one of my favorite anime (shoujo or otherwise,) and I have been trying to spread the news of it. You see I've bombarded Viz with letters and e-mail concerning translation of the manga, and they said that if the anime sells well they will consider translating it. So my only hope is for others to discover this unbelievably wondrous anime.

Dustin Blaine Javier

I'm planning to do a re-look at Please Save My Earth in an upcoming issue, soon as I have the space in which to do one. Until then, I hope you enjoy the many shoujo-type titles that I covered in this issue — I love the stuff, and I promise you'll be seeing more of it in AnimeFan. ^_^

Hocus Pocus



Welcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leafs you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail to GameFan, or email hocuspocus@gamefan.com. Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...

GRAND PRIZE
GXTV!

FIRST PRIZE
VIEWPOINT GAME OF YOUR CHOICE

SECOND PRIZE
POCKET GAMEBOY

THIRD PRIZE
1-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO GAMEFAN

gX tv CONTEST



GXTV is the world's first video game TV with hyper-amplified sound and graphics. Enhance the thrill of gaming with adjustable speaker doors, stereo surround sound and a 15-watt sub woofer. Plus, the intense screen graphics will make you feel like your head's right inside the game. GXTV is also a 181-channel, 13" stereo TV with two A/V inputs, stereo headphone jack, backlit remote control and tilt/swivel stand. So whatcha waitin' for? Send in those codes and maybe you can win one of these GXTVs for yourself!

Metal Gear Solid

Gameplay secrets

Sure, Solid Snake is one smooth operator, but does he look as good in a tux as Mr. Bond? Well, with these assorted tricks found in the game, you'll find Solid Snake is more than a match for 007:

Stealth (Invisibility) and Bandana (Semi-infinite ammo)

To get either Stealth or Bandana depends upon whether you submit or resist Revolver Ocelot's torture sequence. If you submit you'll get the Stealth Device when you finish the game, which enables you to move unseen by nearly everything throughout the game. If you resist, you'll get the Bandana which gives you infinite ammunition for any weapon, provided that you have at least one unit of ammo left.




Tuxedo Snake

For a suave and debonair version of Mr. Snake, you must play *Metal Gear Solid* twice and get both endings saved onto the same game. Once you have accomplished this feat, play the game for a third time. As Solid Snake goes up the elevator from the beginning Dock Facility, he'll take off his scuba gear and when he appears, he'll be wearing a tuxedo!





Something about Meryl

Okay you pervs, if ya wanna catch Meryl with her pants down, here are the few places that'll allow you the "peeking Tom's" view. The first time you can view Meryl pantless is in the airduct on your way to rescuing the DARPA Chief. You'll get your first glimpse of Meryl here, where she's doing situps in her bed. Now, exit out of the vent back to the beginning, and go back in. When you look at Meryl again, she'll be doing one-handed pushups and after you exit and re-enter the vent again, she'll be stretching against the wall. Now, after you see her wall-stretch, exit and re-enter the vent once again, and this time, Meryl will be doing situps sans pants!

The second time you'll catch a shot of her butt is when you meet her in the women's restroom prior to your fight with Psycho Mantis. Meryl will be disguised as a guard and if you follow her too closely into the bathroom, she won't have time to fully change!




Blushing Meryl

We know Meryl tries to act all tough, but deep down inside is a shy inner child waiting to come out. Don't believe it? Well, keep staring at Meryl and she'll turn as red as her hair!



Stink Like a Dog

We know it's rude to hit Meryl around, and most of the time she'll retaliate quite violently. However, right after you pass through the Wolf Caverns and meet up with Meryl, go ahead and slap her down. As soon as you do, put the Cardboard Box (any will do) on, and Meryl will command one of the wolves to take a piss on you. Sure, you'll stink, but since you smell like a dog urine, the next time you pass through the Wolf Caverns, the wolves won't attack you.



Making Mei Ling Mad



Mei Ling is a nice cute lady, but keep calling her without saving and she'll start being less supportive. Call her up to six times without saving and she'll stick her tongue out at you!

Mantis Power!

When you are about to confront Psyco Mantis, try to have a memory card with any Konami game save on it. When he tries to prove to you that he has the skill to read thoughts etc., he will tell you what saved games you have on your memory card!

Tenchu

Japanese Language

To hear nearly all (except the ending) the conversation that take place in the proper (and much better) Japanese language, enter the following commands at the Mission Select screen (after you select your character):

Hold L1, then press left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, then Circle. You should hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly.

Level Select



To open all missions, at the Mission Select screen, enter the following commands: hold R2, then press left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, Square. You should hear a confirmation sound indicating that you can now select any level.

Level Layout

To choose between the three different layouts of each level, enter the following commands at the Mission Select screen: hold R1, then press left, left, down, down Square, Square, Triangle, X. You should hear a confirmation sound where you'll be able to pick any of the three layouts for each mission.

Hidden Items



To have all the hidden items that you receive after you finish each mission with a Grandmaster ranking, use the following code at the Item Select screen: Hold R1, then press left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, Circle. All the hidden items should appear on the right side.

99 Capacity
To enable your character to hold a total capacity of 99 items, enter the following code at the Item Select screen: Hold L1, then press left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, Square. The Item Capacity number should change to 99 if you input the code correctly.

Increase Items
To increase the number of items that you possess at the Item Select screen, enter the following commands at the Item Select screen: Hold L2, then press left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, X. The number of items in the Item Select screen should all increase by one. Repeat up to 99 times (note: some items will not increase).

Ayame's 3rd outfit
For an interesting new outfit for the femme fatale, you have to have the Body Armor in you Item Select screen. When you do, select it for the mission, and enter the following commands in the Item Select scren: left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, Circle. Start a mission and get ready to catch your jaw!




Replenish Health
To replenish all your health, during gameplay, pause the game and enter the following commands:
left, left, down, down, Square, Square, Triangle, Square. The game should automatically unpause and your health will be at max.

Rogue Trip

For the following codes to work, enter them at the Password Entry in the Options Menu.

Boss Battle:
Big Daddy: Square, Triangle, Circle, Circle, R2, R2



Extra Armor: R1, Triangle, R1, Triangle, L1, Square

Infinite Jump: Circle, Square, R2, X, Triangle, R2

Infinite Turbo: Square, X, Circle, Triangle, R1, R2

Play as Goliath:
Triangle, L1, R1, X, L2, L2



Play As Nightshade:
R1, R2, L1, L1, X, Circle

Play As Helicopter: L1, Triangle, R2, Triangle, Triangle, R1

Play As Alien: R1, Square, X, Squre, L2, Circle

Rival Schools

Evolution Disk: There are several hidden options on the Disk 2: Evolution of Rival Schools and why? Because Capcom loves you!

Soccer Target Shooting
To get the Target Mode, simply finish a "1P Game" with any character. In this mode, guide Roberto to hit the point cards on the goal.



Home Run Derby
To get the Home Run Mode, finish a "1P Game" with Shoma as your main character on the highest difficulty. In the Home Run derby, you control Shoma as you hit some baseballs out of the ballpark. Your score is the top 5 out of 10 tries.



Serves Up
To get the Service mode, finish a "1P Game" with Natsu as your main character on the highest difficulty. In this mode, you control Natsu by adjusting both the power and angle of trajectory of your service. Hit any of the student faces for points, but don't hit the principal!



24 Extra Fighters
Every time you finish a "1P Game" on the Evolution Disk, a new extra fighter will be added to your listing of fighters. Each fighter has "borrowed" moves from the normal cast of characters.



Hidden Outfits
There are four hidden outfits for Hinata (underwear), Natsu (dress), Tiffany (school uniform), and Kyoko (shirt and boxers). To get them, you must beat the "1P Game" and play each of them as your main character. While they don't have different moves from their normal counterparts, they do have new Tag Team Supers!



F-Zero X

Everything Code
At the Mode Select screen, press L Shift button, Z, R Shfit button, C-up, C-down, C-left, C-right, and Start. You should hear a chime if you input the code correctly.

Car Colors
At the car customization screen, press the R Shift button to change your vehicle's colors. There are a limited amout of colors to each vehicle though.

Tiny Cars
At the Vehicle Select screen, press and hold both L and R Shift buttons. While holding those buttons press C-left, and C-down to shrink the vehicles.

Colony Wars: Vengeance

Having trouble staying on target? Need that extra "oomph" in your inventory of destruction? Enter the following codes in the Password screen to get the edge you need.

Vampire - Invincibility
Thunderchild - All ships selectable
Demon - Mission select
Tornado - Have all weapons
Chimera - Infinite secondary weapons
Avalanche - Infinite afterburner

Dark*Angel - Primary weapons don't overheat
Hydra - Max upgrade credits

Blitz '99

Match Up Codes

Big Players	1-4-1 Right
Big Head Team	2-0-3 Right
Fast Passes	2-5-0 Left
Headless Team	1-2-3 Right
Hide Name	1-0-2 Right
Huge Football	0-5-0 Right
Huge Head	0-4-0 Up
Hyper Blitz	5-5-5 Up
Invisible	4-3-3 Up
Late Hits	0-1-0 Up
More Speed	4-0-4 Left
Night Game	2-2-2 Right




No CPU Assistance	0-1-2 Down
No First Downs	2-1-0 Up
No Fumbles	4-2-3 Down
No Head	3-2-1 Left
No Interceptions	3-4-4 Up
No Out Of Bounds	2-1-1 Left
No Punting	1-5-1 Up
No Random Fumbles	4-2-3 Down
Power Blockers	3-1-2 Left



Power Defense	4-2-1 Up
Powerup Blockers	3-1-2 Left
Powerup Defense	4-2-1 Up
Powerup Offense	3-1-2 Up
Powerup Speed	4-0-4 Left
Powerup Teammates	2-3-3 Up
Random Plays	1-1-5 Left
Show Field Goal %	0-0-1 Down
Show More Field	0-2-1 Right
Smart CPU	3-1-4 Down
Super Field Goals	1-2-3 Left
Tiny Players	3-1-0 Right
Tournament Mode	1-1-1 Down
Turn Off Stadium	5-0-0 Left
Unlimited Turbo	5-1-4 Up
Clear Weather	2-1-2 Left
Rain	5-5-5 Right
Snow	5-2-5 Down
Fog	0-3-0 Down
Thick Fog	0-4-1 Down

G Darius

Unlimited Continues

Get over 100 continues then enter the Options screen. You will now have the ability to change the number of credits to free play.

View All the Movies

Want to see all the FMVs without beatingthe game? Just go to the options menu, go down to "Movie" and press Down, Up,Down, Up, then hold R1 + R2 + L1 + L2 and press Start.

Twisted Metal 3

Auger Passwords
Washington DC - R1, R1, Select,Down
Hangar 18 - X, Start, X, Up, L1
North Pole - Select, R1, Left, Left,X
London - Right, Right, R1, R1,Right
Tokyo - Down, R1, L1, X, Right
Egypt - R2, Start, R2, Right, Right
Blimp - Triangle, L1, Triangle, Right, Circle

Axel Passwords
North Pole - X, Triangle, Square,R2, X
London - Up, L2, Circle, Square,L1
Tokyo - Up, Triangle, Select, Right,Up
Egypt - Left, Up, L1, Up, R2
Blimp - L1, R1, Up, Left, Circle

Club Kid Passwords
Washington DC - Down, X, Up, Right, Down
Hangar 18 - R2, Right, O, L2, L1
North Pole - Triangle, O, Down, Triangle, X
London - Square, Right, Square, Square, Up
Tokyo - O, R2, Start, Right, R2
Egypt - Right, Right, Down, R2, X
Blimp - L1, Circle, Start, Triangle, Left




Firestarter Passwords
Washington DC - Left, R2, Select, L1, Up
Hangar 18 - L1, R2, X, Left, Down
North Pole - O, R2, R1, R1, R2
London - Select, R1, Right, Square, Select
Tokyo - Start, R2, Right, L2, Start
Egypt - Down, Select, X, Triangle, Left
Blimp - L2, L2, L, Square, R1

Mr. Grimm Passwords
Washington D.C. - Down, Down, Start, R2, Circle
Hangar 18 - R2, X, Triangle, Down, Right
North Pole - Triangle, Down, Right, R2, R2
London - X, X, Square, Circle,Circle
Tokyo - Down, L2, Select, Select,Right
Egypt - Up, Circle, Up, Up, L1
Blimp - Left, Right, L1, Right, L2

Outlaw 3 Passwords
Washington D.C. - Triangle, Select, Down, Circle, L1
Hangar 18 - Square, L1, R2, R2,Square
North Pole - Start, Circle, Right, Up, L2
London - Up, R2, Triangle, Select,R2




Tokyo - Left, Right, Up, Circle, X
Egypt - L1, R2, X, Left, Start
Blimp - Circle, Left, R1, Up, L2

Bonus Characters

To play as Minion or Sweet Tooth, enter one of these codes at the password screen.
Minion - Up, Start, Down, L1,Square
Sweet Tooth - Circle, Circle, L1, L1, Start



PLAYSTATION 2 GEARING UP

Rumors have been flying across the net with regards to Sony's next console, *PlayStation 2*, and a chipset they are supposedly developing with Toshiba for use in the new system, which they hope will give Dreamcast a run for its money. If the specs that have been floating around are true, however, they could do much more than that. Initial reports indicate that Sony will attempt to steal some of Sega's launch thunder by officially announcing the new console shortly after this issue goes to press, but at the current time, no statements have been made...

What we do know are a few specs on the chipset itself, which will supposedly be a two-chip set comprised of a Digital Signal Processor, rumored to clock in at 250 Mhz, and a RISC-based chip. There have been multiple reports on the chipset's ability to decode MPEG-2 files. In the event that there is any validity to these statements, we could be looking at a DVD-based format for the PSX-2, which could be huge for both the system and the format. Not only that, but instead of utilizing polygons as the system's primary 3D format, Nurbs may be the order of the day... Rest assured we'll be back with more next issue, but until then, we can only hope that these rumors of a DVD-capable gaming machine are on then money. Maybe then ECM will break down and shell out the dough for *Doc Hollywood*...

DREAMCAST'S HI-RES HOPES

Then again, why wait on the word there, when Sega has unleashed a slew of info on their upcoming super-system, and they are good tidings indeed. At the recent Sega Gamer's Day, reps from Sega boasted that the DC will come out sporting "above Model 3 performance" from the get-go, and from what we have seen of *VF3tb*, this could very well be the case... Thankfully, Sega is pulling out all the stops when it comes to supporting this visual powerhouse, and the support for various display options looks to be a welcome departure from the consoles of old. Expect not only the option for the now-standard S-Video and the increasingly popular RGB outs, but the DC will also come packing a VGA out, which will allow you to hook up your Dreamcast to a computer monitor for some true high-resolution experiences. It is also quite possible that we'll see support for the pricey yet amazingly crisp HDTV format.

SEGA'S NUTTY ABOUT THE NET

Internet gaming will also play a big role in Sega's plans, and after opting to include a 33.6 modem with the Japanese system (where Internet gaming has a significantly smaller foothold in the gaming industry, due to outrageous phone charges), we can only imagine what the gang at Sega has cooked up for us here in the 'net crazy States.

Rumor has it that *Sega Rally 2*, once slated as a launch title, was delayed solely for the purpose of perfecting the online aspects of the game...

Additionally, Sega has slowly begun releasing details on a massively multi-player online RPG from Beantown-based developer Turbine Entertainment, who is currently hard at work on a similar online fantasy RPG, *Asheron's Call* (which, interestingly enough, is a Microsoft property). Could we be looking at a DC version of *AC* or perhaps even a direct port where PC and Dreamcast users will be able to co-exist online?

If that is the case, this title, which is slated to hit the U.S. very close to launch (right around the time *AC* will hit the PC... hmmmmm), could be a very important title for the future of console gaming. Only time will tell if we're looking at something along those lines or the possibility of an entirely different title altogether. But one thing is for sure — Sega is wisely putting a strong emphasis on this aspect of the hardware's capability, though it's a bit odd that *VF3tb* currently lacks this mode of play...

Another bit of info is that Sega is looking for developers to really break the mold on their first generation software. According to Sega, the development process has truly become a group effort to re-establish Sega in the console market. Even in-house developers, who are normally quite secretive about their software secrets, are pulling out all stops to make sure the DC hits our shores with a bang. This includes making sure that every 3rd-party developer has complete access to all the hardware tricks they have picked up, which should result in a slew of quality titles out of the gate... Regardless of this current 3rd party buzz, our money is still on the digital splendor that is *Sonic Adventure*, and Sega is currently busy tweaking the game to ensure a constant 60 fps. Seeing Sonic blaze through loops and jump seemingly endless chasms at this high frame rate was enough to make a Sega nut's blue blood boil.

IOMEGA DREAMS OF THE CONSOLE MARKET

An additional shred of info included in the unveiling of the Dreamcast is the serial port, which Sega stated was for 'upcoming peripherals.' When you tie this in with recent confessions from Iomega that they are indeed working on a storage peripheral for use in the console market, we could be looking at some interesting implications in terms of general Internet use and gaming on the console. Not only would such a peripheral allow gamers to take part in the online gaming community to the fullest extent (they could download the likes of custom 'mods' for deathmatch style games), but we might even be looking at the possibility of a way to actually retain information from outings using the system's Internet browsing capabilities.

THE SQUARE FACTOR

Ask anyone in Japan what the key 3rd party developer in the console market is, and they'll tell you it's Square. Obviously, Sega is hoping they will come on board, and after a recent interview with the development team for their upcoming PlayStation RPG, *Saga Frontier 2*, this gamer's dream may be a lot closer to reality than industry skeptics would like to believe. Rumor has it that Square has received Set 5 development kits, and are strongly considering a version of the aforementioned RPG for the DC. Couple that with confirmation that EA has also received dev kits and is very close to an official confirmation, and the software side of the U.S. Dreamcast launch is looking better by the day.

SEGA TO RE-ENTER THE PORTABLE MARKET?

You'd think that Sega would have its hands full with all this Dreamcast madness, but it looks like they are equally focused on making gamer's hands busy with a new 32-bit portable gaming machine. Details are somewhat sketchy at this point, but multiple sources have indicated that Sega is knee-deep in possibilities. The most likely of these options is the link between Sega and portable power-house Bandai, in some sort of collaboration with their upcoming 'WonderSwan' unit, which is also rumored to feature some sort of Dreamcast compatibility along the same lines as the Neo Geo Pocket. Or maybe we're looking at a completely new piece of hardware... Game Gear 2, anyone?

THE FORCE IS WITH... NINTENDO?

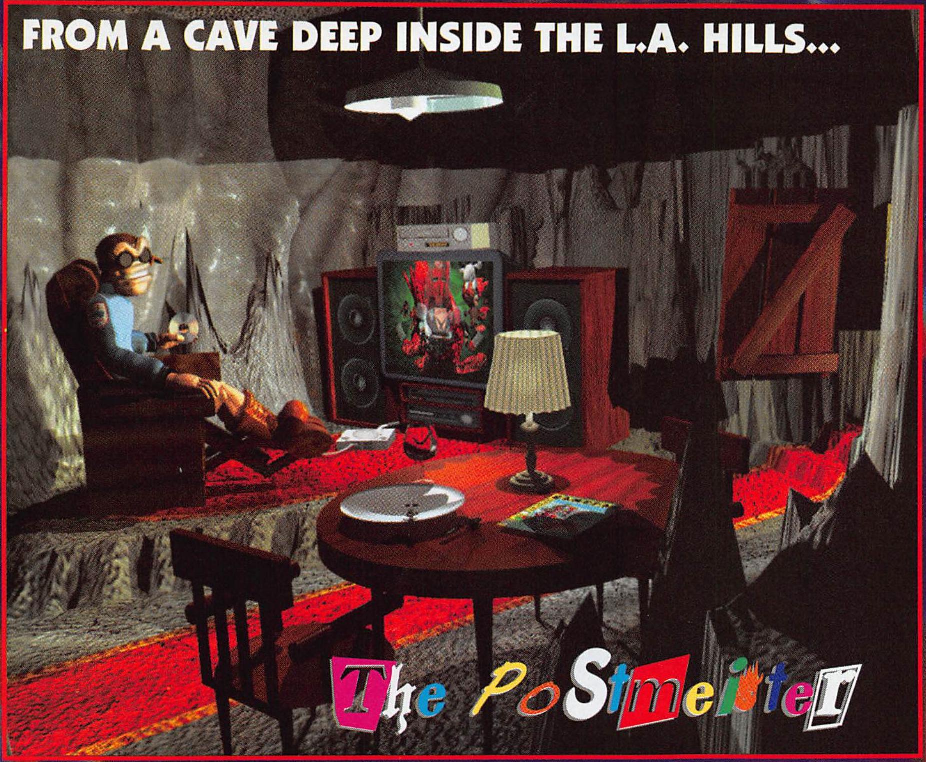
The frenzy over the new *Star Wars* movie, *The Phantom Menace*, has already begun. The game and the movie are set to be released May 21, 1999. Nintendo has the rights to the game, and it was no surprise since LucasArts and Nintendo have tag-teamed already on *Rogue Squadron* and before that *Shadows of the Empire*. *Rebel Assault* and *Dark Forces* on the PlayStation didn't fare as well...

GameFan sources reveal that the first title for the Nintendo 64 and GameBoy based on the movie wil be called *Pod Racer*. The game is based on one of the major action sequences in the *Phantom Menace* that takes place on Tatooine and it will be a racing game. Some sources are suggesting that the game might utilize a version of the *F-Zero X* engine albeit with the benefits of the recently released 4 Meg cart. Unlike *Rogue Squadron*, this game will have multi-player capabilities with up to four players being able to have at it. Although nothing is being talked about officially, LucasArts has already registered the domain name www.podracer.com.

MEET ME MIDWAY

GameFan has learned that Midway is working on a new *Rampage* title for the Nintendo 64, and it will be entitled *Rampage Universal 2*. ECM is already slobbering... Midway is also working on a hockey game for the Dreamcast without the Gretzky license. Gretzky is out as the official spokesperson for Midway. But rumors are surfacing that an internal Midway panel might can the project due to quality concerns...

As for more solid Dreamcast games that Midway is working on, gamers can look for *Gauntlet Legends*, which will take full advantage of the Dreamcast's Net-play capabilities. As previously reported, there is also an *MK* title in the works as well as *California Speed*... In the deepest bowels of Midway they're working on an arcade and home format baseball game developed by Stormfront Studios. The title is being done by the same team that made *Tony LaRussa Baseball*. The title isn't expected to be ready until 2001. Expect baseball to get the *Jam/Blitz* treatment — we can't wait!



Howdy folks, Posty here. Things have been a little hectic at GameFan these past few months, but finally everything is beginning to calm down. The offices have moved and so must I. The next time we speak will be from my new digs, in Woodland Hills. While I couldn't convince Kid Fan to front the money for a nicer pad, I will be getting a new La-Z-Boy and a Clapper. If I manage to sell the old cave (no buyers as of yet) then I can put a down payment on a Dreamcast and a DVD player. Posty'll be livin' the high life. Enough chit-chat. Let's get to some letters...

NEO-OBSESSED

Dear Postmeister,

I noticed in Vol. 6 Issue 8 a nice review of *Metal Slug 2*, and some viewpoints on it as well. Way to go! Great job of doing what no other mag would dare do: touch the Neo Geo. This system is amazing and people need to know it. Your review of *Metal Slug 2* was a start.

Now for the complaints....

This El Niño dude saying the Neo Geo is "out of date hardware"?!??!? What???? Being nearly 9 years old does not equal out of date. "Out of date" is not based on age, but technology. No other machine can do 2D like the Neo Geo can, not even the Saturn. When the PSX port of *Metal Slug 2* comes out, compare it side by side to the Neo Geo, and tell me which system is "out of date." If you think 2D gaming is "out of date" then you are not a hardcore gamer, period. End of story. We must be cherishing and loving the Neo for keeping 2D gaming alive for so long!

ECM stating *Metal Slug 2* is "The best Neo Geo game ever? And then some!!!" Whoa dude, that's just the Neo taking its grip on you and showing you its beautiful 2D ways. There are many Neo Geo games that are up there with *Metal Slug 2*. If you think *MS2* is awesome, get your hands on *Blazing Star, Exchanger, Neo Turf Masters, Neo Drift Out, King of Fighters '98, Kizuna Encounter, Shocktroopers*, and even *Pulstar* (a 3 year old game.) Just to name a few.

If you guys are gonna call yourself "The last true enthusiast magazine," then live up to that claim. Cover, and play, MORE Neo Geo games. All hardcore gamers either respect and desire a Neo, or have one in their homes. Calling *MS2* the greatest Neo game ever, and calling the Neo itself "out of date hardware" is proof that you guys just haven't logged many hours on that black box, so get with it boys!

Thanks for shedding a little light on the Neo for the clueless out there that just don't know. Now do this wonderful system justice and cover it some more! By the way, *Slug 2* was done by Nazca, a 3rd party Neo company, not SNK.

A Neo Geo fan,
Matt
on-line

Dear Matt,

It's always good to hear from a Neo Geo fan, however delusional he may be. All of the games you mention I agree are great. Hell, most of the Neo Geo games are great (except that horse racing title – that was a little to "niche" for me). We play a lot of Neo Geo in the office (my personal fave is King of Fighters '96*), just check out* Graveyard *this month. In fact, ECM is making an effort to beef up the coverage — a move we all support.*

We all take issue with some of the things you say, though. Firstly, these are our opinions, not yours. El Niño, ECM and Waka happened to think Metal Slug 2 *is the best Neo Geo game available, and that is their right. Dango may not agree, but he wasn't writing the review (probably too busy playing* Samurai Shodown*).*

Not to laugh at your expense, but how can you write "Being nearly 9 years old does not equal 'out of date'"? Especially when you follow up that statement with "'Out of date' is not based on age, but technology"? The technology is totally out of date. The games are so damn good because all of the developers are so adept at working with the available hardware that they are able to work wonders. Last time I checked, some of the final Genesis games looked phenomenal (like Vectorman 2 *and* Adventures of Batman and Robin*); and how about* NHL 94*? No game has that playability nowadays. As beautiful as these games were (and are), the Genesis was still totally outdated and the quality of these games can be attributed to developer know-how.*

The Neo Geo has some fantastic 2D capabilities but to even think of comparing its specs to that of a Saturn, PlayStation, N64 or Dreamcast is downright ludicrous. Love your Neo Geo, don't let it cloud your judgement.

Our mistake on the developer. It happens, though.

Keep on reading the mag, Matt. And for God's sake, play that Metal Slug 2*!!*

ZELDA BIASED?

Dear Posty,

Boy, was I [angry] when I read GameFan's blasphemy that *MGS* was the game of the year! Um, hello? I think you guys are missing something. Maybe it's called *ZELDA*?!?!?! Speak its name in revered tones, nay, whisper it... For when November 23 comes... Z-DAY has arrived. TWO MILLION *Zelda* cartridges will be sold by New Year's, while *MGS* will barely manage a million. If *MGS* takes 4-6 hours to complete, and *Zelda* takes FORTY, then it's becoming increasingly obvious that *Zelda* is the better game...

Bobby "Bobbo" Krikorian
Anaheim, CA

Dear "Bobbo",

Ease up there, Champ, or I'll put you in a steel cage with Matt and let you two Thunderdome. *For starters, "we" didn't say that* Metal Gear Solid *was game of the year. Pay a little more attention, next time. Dango said it was his game of the year. Many of us don't share the same opinion. ECM and El Niño thought* FF Tactics *was the best game whereas Teeter agrees with you. And where do you get off assuming* Zelda *is better? As I write this, you haven't even played* Zelda *yet, fool. You are in no position to make any statements; at least we played both games. You are just sitting around making assumptions. You should also formulate some thoughts on your own instead of stealing them from Nintendo press releases. Neither you nor Nintendo has any idea how many* Zeldas *will sell. It also isn't fair to compare numbers because the number of available games for PSX owners far outnumbers those available to N64 owners — of course* Zelda *will post higher sales than* MGS. MGS *is short (and some, like El Niño and Waka, think that is lame, like with* Res 2) *but that doesn't make it any less of a good gaming experience.*

A FUTURE VOTER...

Dear GameFan

I would begin as I normally do most of my letters by saying something formal and impersonal: How are you doing? Anyhoo, here's the meat of my letter: I bet you guys have heard of emulators and roms, right? I know I have; that's why I am talking about it. What do you think about them? I love your mag (and your web-site also). Hey, and don't forget, you better be running for president in 2000, the Jesse "The Body" Ventura has already cleared the road for you.

Sincerely,
Fitz Vo
(on-line)

Dear Fitz,

El Niño is way ahead of you. He has already started a grass roots campaign to get the word out for Election 2000. He figures that all of Jesse's constituents will support him, as well as all Bill and Opus supporters and enemies of the pro-chupacabra movement. Right now El Niño is looking for the right running mate. He has narrowed the list down to George "The Animal" Steel, Joey Buttafuoco or Richie Sambora.

As far as ROMs and emulators go, they are a cool idea, but we frown upon them. This is no better than pirating and we all know pirating is illegal and totally screws the developer of said games.

FINAL FANTASY VIII, ALREADY?

Dear Postmeister,

Hi, I'm a big fan of your magazine! Your articles and codes really help me get the most possible enjoyment out of my games. I just love the AnimeFan section! That, and your various screenshots and illustrations provide some great inspiration for my artwork. I have questions I would like to ask:

1) Do you have any information on the *FFVIII* characters and plot?

2) Is it true that there is a *FFVII* code to get all of your heroes to level 99, at the start of the game? I read somewhere that all you have to do is press L1, R2, square and circle, simultaneously. I don't have *FFVII* yet, so I can't test it. Will you find out if it works?

Aja Rivard
Mesa, AZ

Dear Aja,

Shidoshi will be happy to hear your praises for his anime section. I, the great Posty, will be glad to shed some light on your questions.

As for the FFVIII *info, here goes...*

The plotline really isn't a simple thing. Err... I could tell you about it for months, but Square has just released the new story involving all of the current characters (the guy in the cowboy hat HAS to go!). There is this guy that is trying to become an elite member of some squad and he gives a scar to someone — who gives him one in return. Some chick falls in love with him, his friend gets involved, who also wants to become a leader of the squad, but the guy who gets the first scar consults a witch who wants to conquer the universe. Did you get all that? Waka will have a full-blown FFVIII *feast in the next issue, so just hold on.*

That code you are referring to doesn't work. In fact, I don't believe such a code exists (I consulted Dango, and he says "NO"). I think you may want to actually purchase the game, though, because that code, as well as FFVIII *info doesn't really have any practical use unless you own the game.*

Talk to you later,
Posty

UNCLE OWEN, THIS R2 UNIT HAS A BAD MOTIVATOR...

Dear Posty,

First of all I must start out by saying what a wonderful magazine [GameFan] is; I read it all the time. The reason I am writing this letter is to get help on a subject that I know you can help me with. I currently own an original ColecoVision and am looking for a buyer — maybe someone who collects video games and does not have a ColecoVision system yet. I am willing to sell the system to the highest bidder. There is one catch: The system does not work. I



should not say that it does not work [all the time] because I got it to work sometimes. Right now I am in the process of getting it fixed at a place that specializes in only Atari and ColecoVision systems, but if someone wants to buy it and get it fixed themselves, they may do so.

Chris Barthol
Houston, Texas

Dear Chris,

Get the thing fixed and go from there. There is a site called ebay.com which specializes in on-line auctions, selling everything from Beanie Babies to video games. This might be your best bet. I don't know if anyone would want to go through the hassle of getting it fixed after buying it from you. Just add the cost to your asking price and see what happens.

Write to me or I'll run for President!
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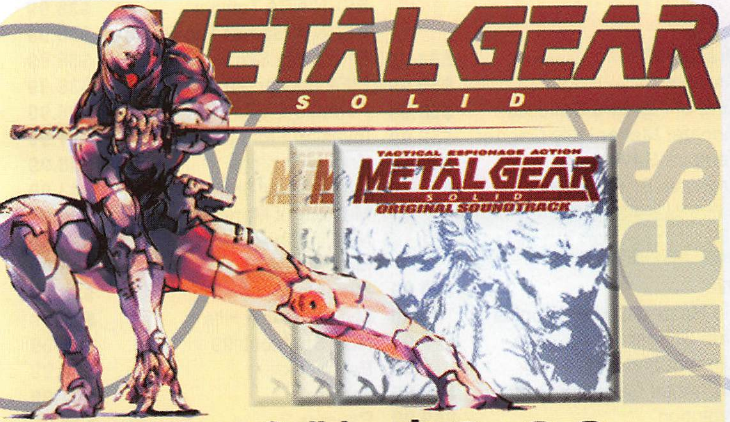
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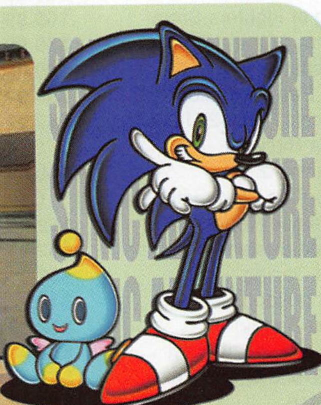
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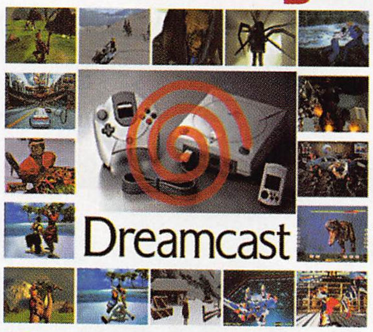


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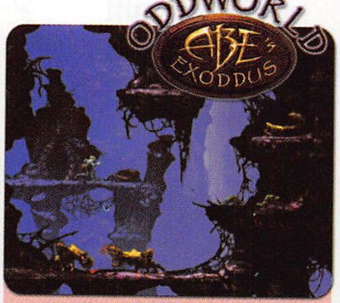
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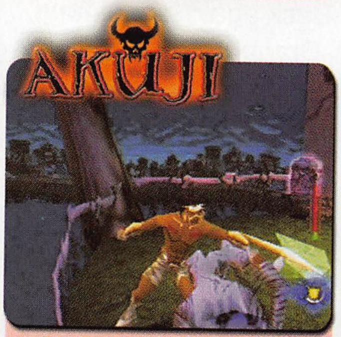
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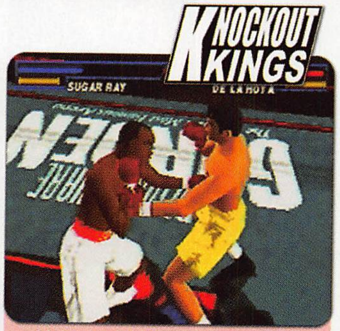
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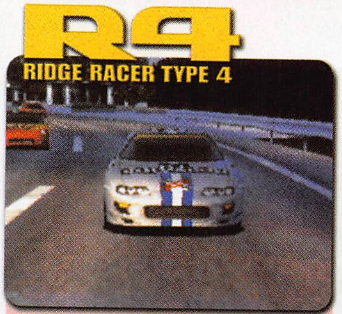
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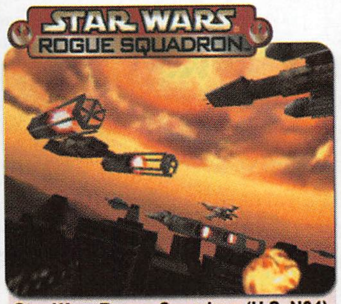
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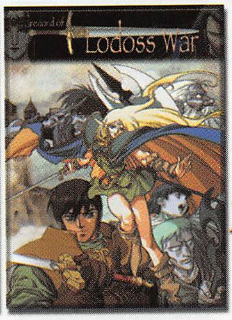
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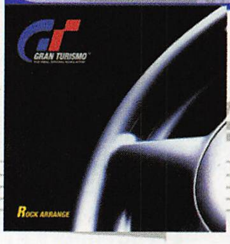
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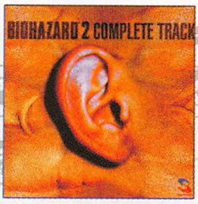
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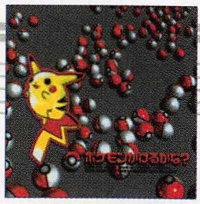
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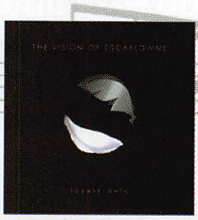
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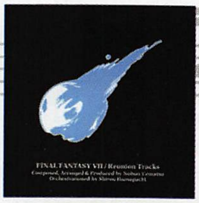
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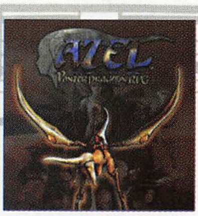
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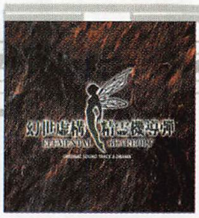
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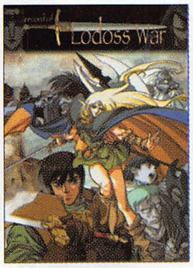
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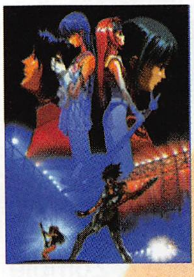
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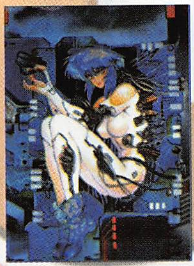
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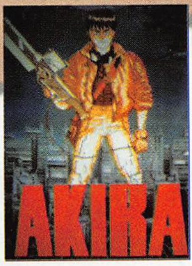
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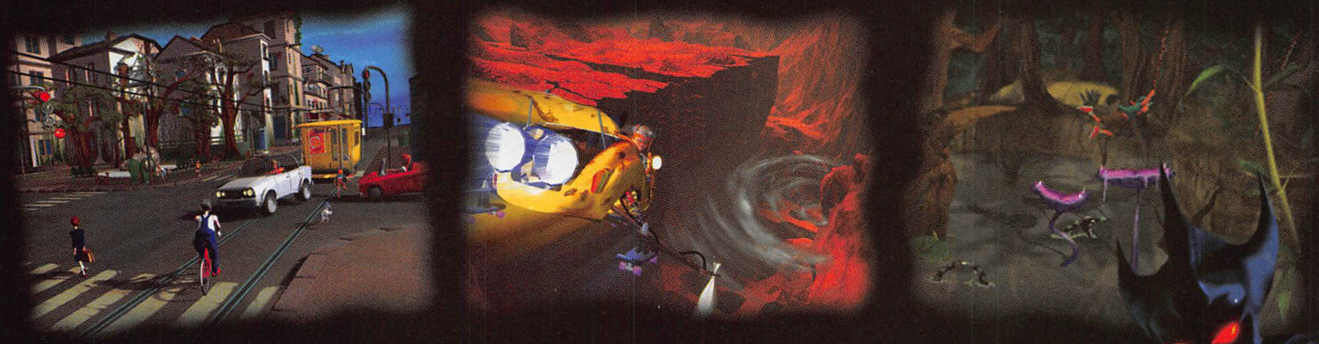
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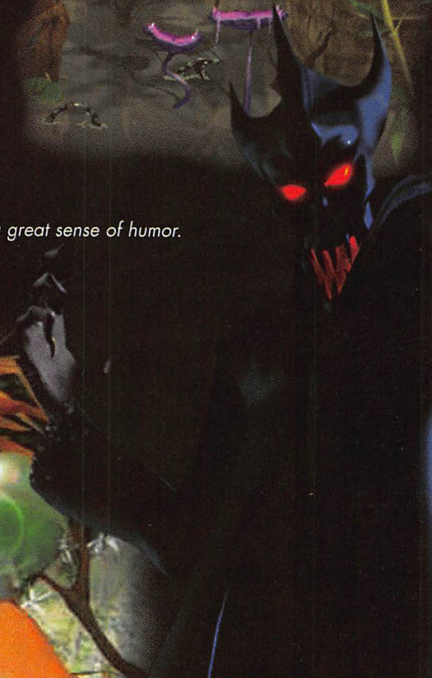
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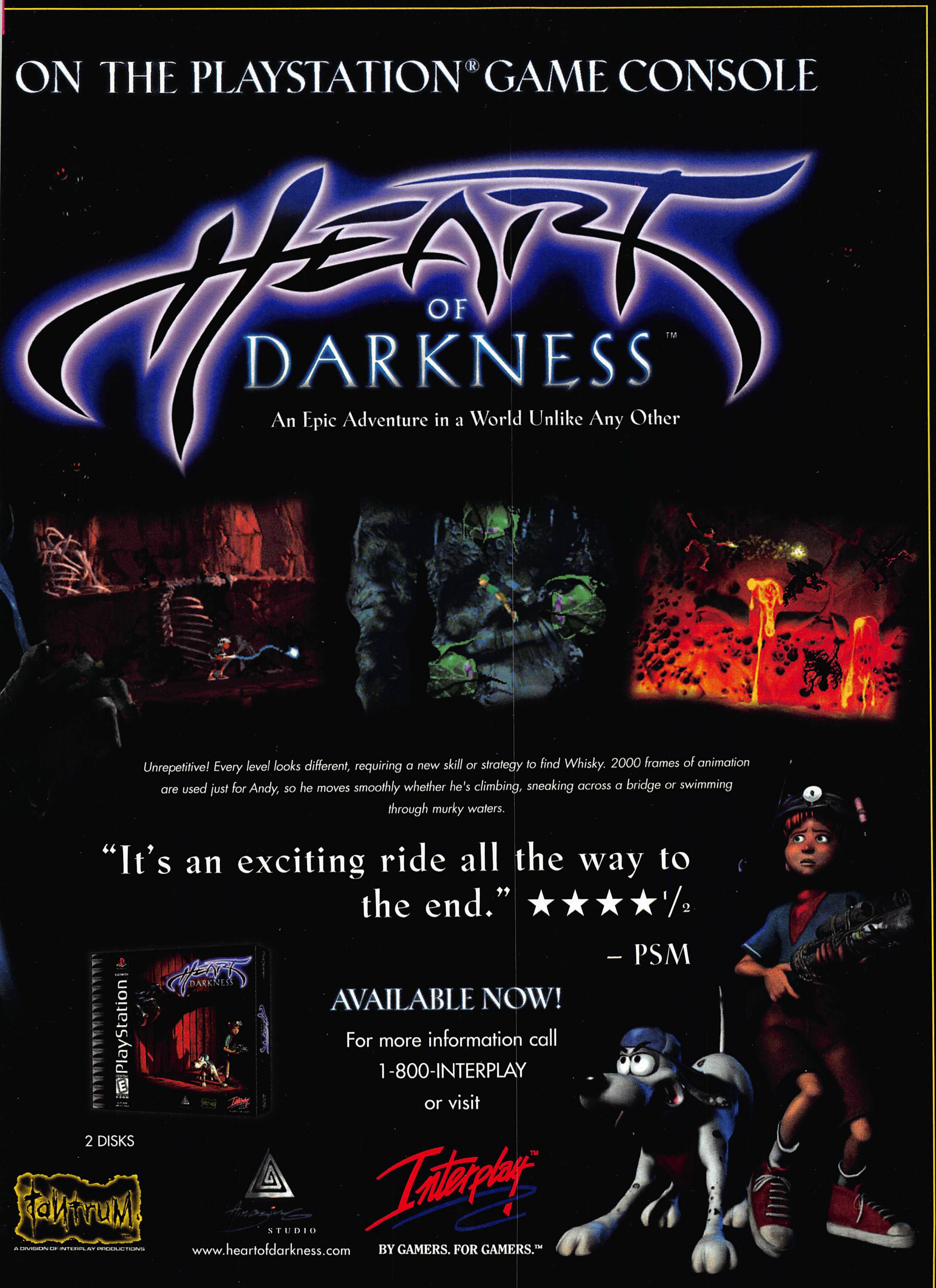


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